

Senate House Library User Survey 2024

1. Introduction

The purpose of conducting the Senate House Library (SHL) User Survey is to:

- Measure overall satisfaction with our services.
- Identify any changes in the way our members access SHL so that we are able to adjust our services accordingly.
- Discover the extent to which members are using any new services we have introduced since the previous survey.
- Become aware of new or pressing issues that need to be addressed.

The survey is currently conducted annually and this year's survey consisted of nine questions. It included some repeat questions from last year's survey but also new ones designed to better understand how our members use our growing collection of e-resources. Another new question sought their views on possible future changes to the Library's space as part of the [Library Transformation Programme](#).

2. Methodology

The survey was targeted specifically at our current members, although it was available for anyone to complete via our website. A link to the survey was emailed to just over 30,000 of our members and the survey was promoted on social media and through the SHL website. A link to the survey was also sent to the University of London federal member libraries to circulate to their own students. As an incentive, we offered two respondents the chance to win either a £100 John Lewis gift card or a £100 National Book Token. The survey ran for a period of nine weeks between 23 April and 27 June 2024.

The response rate of 6% was lower than previous years, suggesting that there is some survey fatigue amongst our members.

The fact that nearly 2000 members *did* respond means this survey is still a valid way of obtaining feedback and measuring satisfaction, but we will be looking at how we can increase response rates next year – or we may even decide to revert to biannual surveys.

3. Summary of results

The results are presented in full below this brief summary.

Overall satisfaction

The percentage of respondents very satisfied or satisfied with our services was 95%. This compares with 95% in 2023 and 94% in 2022.

How members access SHL's collections, services and spaces

After a noticeable shift back to visiting in person in the years following the pandemic, the way members access our services has remained steady since last year.

58% of respondents said they accessed SHL services in person compared to 59% in 2023. Similarly, the percentage who accessed resources exclusively online remained the same at 7%, with 29% accessing SHL both physically and online (compared to 32% last year). Note that overall visits to the Library continued to rise in 2023-24.

The proportion of users who cited 'using our print collections' as a reason for accessing our services (either in person or online) was up slightly from 39% to 43%.

Their reasons for using SHL were also similar to the previous year: as a study space (71%), to access our print collections (43%), and to access our online collections (31%) being the main ones. Bloom@SenateHouse continues to be a definite draw for our members, with 31% of respondents choosing this (up from 26% last year).

Use (and non-use) of e-resources

We asked respondents who didn't use our e-resources – or only used them occasionally – to tell us why.

31% of members who did not access our e-resources at all said this was because they preferred to use print material and 34% said that it was because the e-resources provided by their home institution (e.g. through their VLE) were sufficient to cover their needs. Responses from members who used online resources a little, but primarily used print, were similar.

However, 25% of respondents who didn't use our e-resources at all said that this was because they *didn't know* how to access them. This shows that there is still work for us to do in better highlighting what is available and explaining how to access it.

Additionally, as part of the [Library Transformation Programme](#), we hope to acquire a new 'discovery' platform and we are also working to improve the navigability of our website – both of which should help to improve awareness of our e-resources.

Lack of offsite access to e-resources (5-10%) and problems logging on (3-5%) were less of an issue than we anticipated.

We were also keen to find out from our members that *did* use our e-resources regularly, how they accessed them. The responses showed that the majority (65%) did so via our Library Catalogue (and the A-Z list of e-resources within it) and another 19% used the library web pages. This suggests that those members who have learned how to access our e-resources are generally able to do so successfully.

New services

We asked our members which of the new services that we have introduced in the past 12 months they had used or benefitted from. The most popular answer was the new seating and space for collaborative study in the Central Hall on the fourth floor (38%). 14% cited the new bookable group study rooms in Bloom@SenateHouse.

New spaces

Opinions about the future refurbishment of the Library were varied but with a definite appetite for more varied types of study space: collaborative spaces or spaces where you can attend online meetings or lectures (68%) and quiet and silent spaces (60%). Perhaps controversially, 49% were in favour of a café within the Library – although there are no plans for this currently.

The responses to this section of the survey will be passed on to the architects who are currently working on plans for how the Library's spaces might be improved and re-developed.

Free text responses and new or pressing issues

We also asked respondents to tell us one thing that they particularly like about SHL and one thing they would like us to improve, introduce or change.

As with last year, our study spaces, atmosphere and location (656 positive comments, 749 if Bloom is included) and our collections (473) remain our most valued services.

Conversely, different aspects of our buildings and facilities (413 comments, 795 if Bloom and study spaces are included) are what our members most want us to improve – and again, these comments will be shared with the architects and our Estates colleagues.

We are currently analysing these free text comments in more depth to gain a greater understanding of our members' views. So far, there do not seem to be any specific new or pressing issues that have not been raised before.

Individualised versions of the survey (including free text comments) are shared with our federal and SAS colleagues.

4. Survey results in full

1. How have you accessed SHL's collections, services and spaces in the past year?

Option	Number	Percentage
1. In person by visiting the Library	1033	58%
2. Remotely online	123	7%
3. A mixture of both but primarily in person	324	18%
4. A mixture of both but primarily online	194	11%
5. I haven't used SHL's collections, services and space	95	5%

To find out more about access to digital collections and e-resources, we asked different questions depending on the responses to question 1.

If option 1 - In person by visiting the Library or option 5 - I haven't used SHL's collections, services and space, were selected in question 1, we asked the following:

1.1. The Library subscribes to a variety of e-resources including eBooks, e-journals and databases. If you have not used our online e-resources, what is the main reason? (Please select all that apply)

Options	Number	Percentage
I prefer to use print material	340	31%
All the online readings I need are provided in my VLE or by my home library	373	34%
SHL doesn't have e-resources that are useful to my study or research	50	5%
I don't know how to find out about SHL's e-resources	269	25%
Many SHL e-resources aren't available off-site (e.g., at home)	59	5%
I have experienced problems logging on when I try to access SHL e-resources	29	3%
None of these	242	22%

If option 3 - A mixture of both but primarily in person was selected in question 1, the following question was asked:

1.2. The Library subscribes to a variety of e-resources including eBooks, e-journals and databases. Although you have used our online resources you primarily use our print material or study spaces. What is the main reason for that? (Please select all that apply)

Options	Number	Percentage
I generally prefer to use print material	193	60%
All the online readings I need are provided in my VLE or by my home library	74	23%
SHL doesn't have many e-resources that are useful to my study or research	36	11%
I don't know how to find out about SHL's e-resources	20	6%
Many SHL e-resources aren't available off-site (e.g., at home)	31	10%
I have experienced problems logging on when I try to access SHL e-resources	16	5%
None of these	47	15%

If option 2 - Remotely online or option 4 - A mixture of both but primarily online were selected for question 1, the following question was asked:

1.3. The Library subscribes to a variety of e-resources including eBooks, e-journals and databases. How do you generally find and access SHL e-resources?

Option	Number	Percentage
I use Google or another search engine	34	11%
I use the SHL web pages	59	19%
I use the Library catalogue (and the a-z list)	204	65%
I use links provided by my lecturer	11	3%
Other	8	3%

2. Which of the following are your reasons for accessing SHL's collections, services and spaces in the past year? (Please select all that apply)

Options	Number	Percentage
Use our print collections	759	43%
Use our special collections	251	14%
Use our online collections (e.g., eBooks, online journals or databases)	540	31%
Use the Library as a study space	1261	71%

Receive support or training from a librarian (online or in person)	61	3%
Visit an exhibition or event (online or in person)	250	14%
Meet fellow students or researchers	359	20%
Use BLOOM@Senate House, study space and café	542	31%
Use the group study spaces in the Library or in BLOOM@Senate House	315	18%
None of these	44	2%

3. Which of the following services that we have introduced in the last year have you used and/or benefitted from? (Please select all that apply)

Options	Number	Percentage
Bookable group study spaces in BLOOM@Senate House on the lower ground floor	244	14%
The Virtual Reading Room service	59	3%
Scanning service for articles and book chapters	106	6%
New seating and space for collaborative and individual study on the 4th floor	657	38%
Upgraded laptop loan service to use in Senate House	84	5%
None of these	896	51%

4. This year we created a new space for both individual and collaborative study on our 4th floor. Thinking about how we might refurbish the Library space in the future, please indicate what spaces you would like to see more of (you can choose more than one):

Options	Number	Percentage
More collaborative spaces	448	26%
More quiet and silent spaces	1028	60%
Spaces where you can attend online meetings or lectures	721	42%
A makerspace	90	5%
VR (virtual reality) and podcasting rooms	133	8%
A café area in the Library	834	49%
More bookable group study rooms	357	21%
Exhibitions and display spaces of SHL collections	286	17%
Accessible desk space	315	18%
Other	102	6%

5. Which of the following University of London institution or other membership category do you belong to?

Option	Number	Percentage
Birkbeck	108	6%
City, University of London	38	2%
Courtauld Institute of Art	24	1%
Goldsmiths, University of London	77	4%
Institute of Cancer Research, London	1	0%
King's College London	233	13%
London Business School	1	0%
London School of Economics and Political Science	131	7%
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	51	3%
Queen Mary, University of London	123	7%
Royal Academy of Music	7	0%
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	12	1%
Royal Holloway, University of London	103	6%
Royal Veterinary College	15	1%
St George's, University of London	18	1%
School of Advanced Study	48	3%
SOAS, University of London	110	6%
UCL	408	23%
University of London, studying at a distance worldwide	17	1%
University of London, central administration	35	2%
University of London Alumni	44	2%
Other UK university	84	5%
Non-UK university	43	2%
Member of the public	23	1%
None of these	16	1%

6. If you are a student or member of staff at a university, which of the following best describes you?

Option	Count	Percentage
Undergraduate	516	31%
Postgraduate taught	474	28%
Postgraduate research	315	19%
Academic staff at a university	252	15%
Other university staff	121	7%

7. Please tell us one thing you particularly like about the Library and its current services.

Category	Number of comments
Bloom and café	93
Building, location, navigation	180
E-resources	138
Facilities	109
Opening hours	54
Other	61
Print Collections	335
Services, access and support	205
Staff	186
Study space and atmosphere	656

8. Please tell us something you would like us to improve, introduce or change.

Category	Number of comments
Bloom and café	39
Building, location, navigation	89
E-resources	78
Facilities	413
Opening hours	60
Other	101
Print Collections	71
Services, access and support	273
Staff	25
Study space and atmosphere	343

9. How satisfied are you overall with the Senate House Library service?

Option	Number	Percentage
Very satisfied	900	51%
Satisfied	775	44%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	75	4%
Dissatisfied	10	1%
Very dissatisfied	5	0%