Grand Valley State University

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October 2011

Government Information Awareness Across Academic Peer Groups

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Government Information Awareness Across Academic Peer Groups

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Grand Valley State University

About GVSU

- Founded 1960
- Public
- Masters-Large
- Campuses in Allendale, Grand Rapids, and Holland, MI
- Strong focus in liberal arts and teaching

About The Survey

- Based on 2006 Survey by Jennie Burroughs from the University of Montana.
- Conducted simultaneously at 11 academic depository libraries. This presentation looks only at responses from Grand Valley State University.
- Online survey hosted by the University of Montana on Select Survey.
- Sample size based on Powell and Connaway's *Basic Research Methods for Librarians* and originally published in Krejcie and Morgan's *Determining Sample Size for Research Activities*.
- Survey participants chosen at random by the Office of Institutional Analysis.
- First email invitation sent on February 14, 2011. Reminder email sent on February 28. Survey closed on March 6.

Question #4

4. How do you hear or learn about government information?

(Check all that apply)

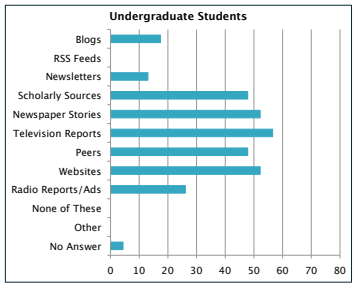
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ RSS Feeds
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☐ Scholarly sources/journals
- ☐ Newspaper stories
- ☐ Television reports/ads
- ☐ Peers
- ☐ Websites
- ☐ Radio reports/ads
- ☐ None of these
- ☐ Other

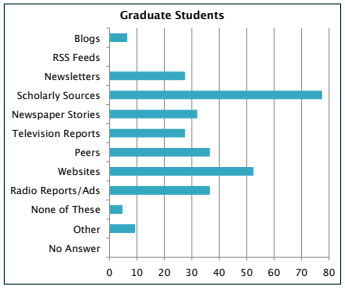
Response Rates

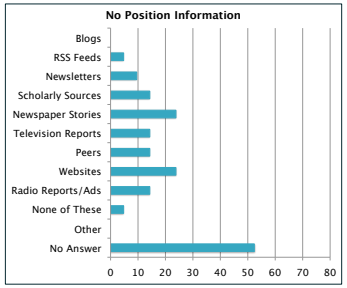
A total of 148 responses were gather for an overall response rate of 11.67%.

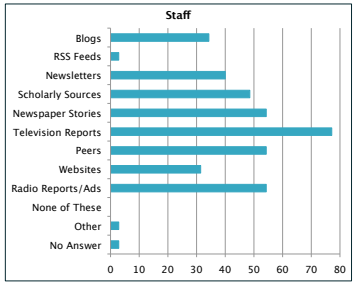
	Population	Surveyed	Responded
Undergraduate Students	20,986	377	23
Graduate Students	3,555	346	23
Faculty	837	260	44
Staff	1,148	285	35
Other Academic Status	*	*	2
No Position Given	*	*	21

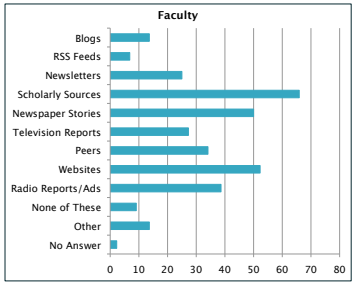
Figure 1. Survey invitation distribution and responses. Although all survey participants were selected as being a member of one of first four groups, two respondents classified themselves as "other academic status" and 21 declined to answer the optional demographics question.





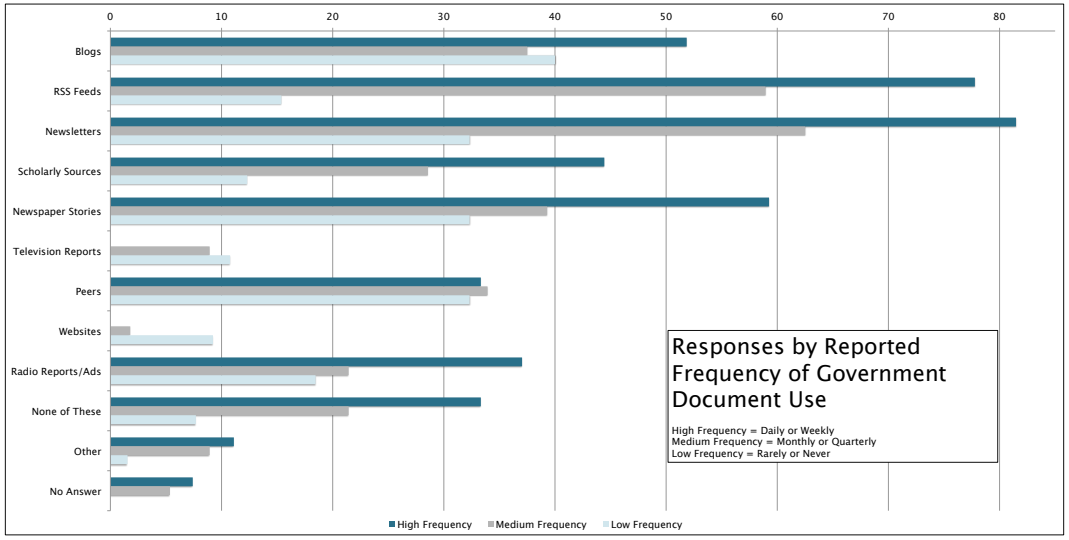






Responses by Reported Position

Note: "Other Academic Status" was omitted from this section due to small sample size.



Responses by Reported Frequency of Government Document Use

High Frequency = Daily or Weekly
Medium Frequency = Monthly or Quarterly
Low Frequency = Rarely or Never

Findings

- There was no clear favorite source for **undergraduate students**, with scholarly sources (47%), newspaper stories (52%), television reports (56%), peers (47%), and websites (52%) all scoring within 9 percentage points.
- More than 77% of **graduate students** report hearing about government documents through scholarly reports – the highest rate of any group. This is probably related to large programs in social work and public affairs.
- **Staff** are most likely to hear about government documents through the media with television (77%), radio (54%), and newspaper (54%) reports being particularly popular. Information from peers also scored highly (54%).
- **Faculty** are most likely to report hearing about government documents from scholarly sources (65%), although half or more also report hearing about them from newspaper stories (50%) and websites (52%).

- **High frequency** users overwhelmingly report hearing about government information via newsletters (81%) and RSS feeds (77%). Newspaper stories (59%) and Blogs (51%) also score highly.
- **Medium frequency** users also report hearing about government documents from RSS feeds (58%) and newsletters (62%).
- **Low frequency** users as a group report hearing about government documents as a lower rate, with no source scoring above 50% and the most commonly reported source being blogs (40%).

Future Action

- Highlight government information being featured in the news. Make it easier for library patrons to find reports and data featured in the media with postings on the website and social media. Keep colleagues informed with formal or informal updates on what documents are in the news and where to locate information.
- Targeted outreach to programs that are most likely to find government reports in scholarly publications in their field.
- Increase awareness of government information through outreach and workshops, as high awareness of government information appears to be related to higher use.

Citation, More Info

Burroughs, J. M. (2009). What users want: Assessing government information preferences to drive information services. *Government Information Quarterly 26*(1), 203-218.

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This research protocol has been approved by the Human Research Review Committee at Grand Valley State University. File No. 11-73-H Expiration: December 10, 2011.