

A Pilot Survey on Institutional Enablers and Barriers Affecting the Evolving Role of Librarians in African Higher Educational Institutions

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Presentation Outline

Background & General Demographics

Management Function Responses

Operational Function Responses

Subject Specialist Function Responses

Technical Function Responses

Librarian Skills Development

Issues and Next Steps

Background

Motivations for this study:

Changing roles of libraries and librarians in the global higher education sector

Ongoing development of relationships between NRENs and the university librarian communities

Emphasis on evolving information management capabilities in higher education

Institutional issues:

1. Logics – what is prevailing set of rules/norms under which libraries operate
2. Constraints – what hinders change
3. Enablers – what encourages change
4. Policy influence – how to institutionalise change

Aims & Objectives

The aim of the pilot survey was to ***identify key institutional enablers and hindrances in the current support for the evolving role of librarians*** in the West and Central African higher education community and to understand their underlying NREN service needs.

The objectives of the survey were to:

1. Understand the evolving role of the librarian in contemporary higher education settings, especially vis-à-vis digital resources.
2. Understand how institutions within the higher education sector support or constrain the roles of librarians, especially where these are concerned with management of digital resources.
3. Elicit the NREN service requirements that librarians need to support their roles
4. Gather demographic information that would be useful in categorizing the librarian communities of practice so as to understand the evolving field better.

Approach

Distribution:

- WACREN – Discussion about libraries in WACREN mailing list

Partners

- WACREN
- Association of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (AUNLU)
- Ivorian Research and Education Network (RITER)

Questionnaire

- 66 questions, 6 sections
- Developed in consultation with HEI librarians in Libsense workshops
- Sections A to D target specific library functions
- Section E deals with librarians' digital skills
- Section F deals with demographics

General Demographics

Responses:

- 64 valid responses out of 92
- 41% gave no demographic data (nearly equal amounts of French and English-speaking)

Country split:

- Nigeria – 38%; Cote D'Ivoire – 8%; Burkina Faso – 5%; Ghana – 3%

Male/Female split:

- Approximately 2:1

Age split:

- ~10% 18 to 35; ~90% > 35

Years of service split:

- 68% - more than 10; 32% - 10 or less

French/English speaking split:

- One-third/two thirds

Library Functions Represented

Out of the 64 usable responses:

43 classed themselves as being in a **management capacity** (67%) – just about ***two-thirds***

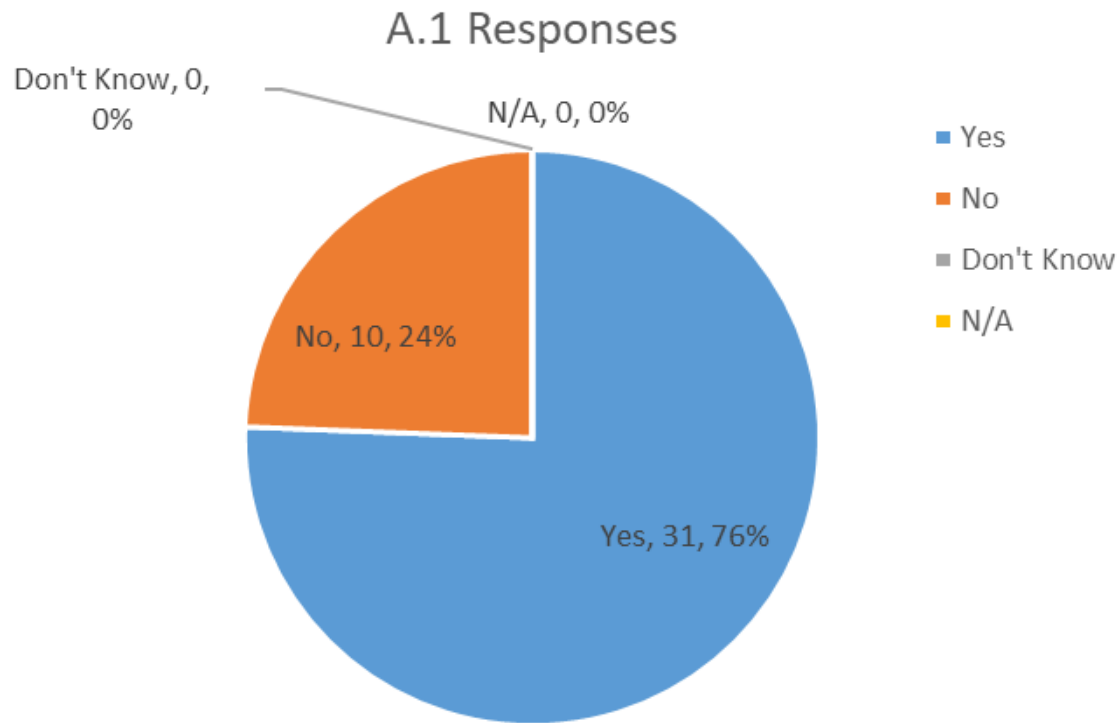
33 classed themselves as being in an **operational capacity** (51%) – just over ***one half***

29 classed themselves as being in a **subject specialist capacity** (45%) nearly ***one half***

31 classed themselves as being in a **technical capacity** (48%) – nearly ***one half***

Management Function

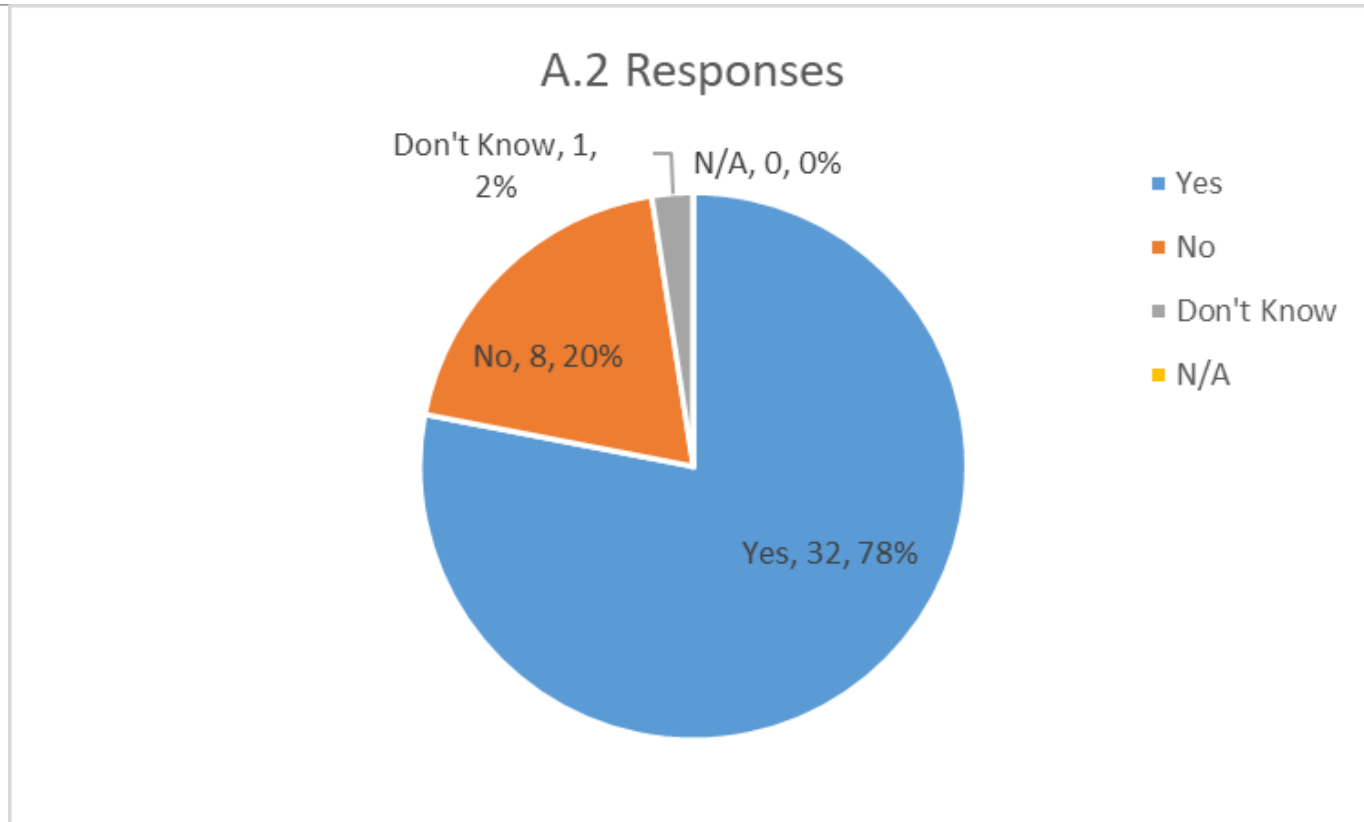
Budgets for traditional and digital collections



Question A.1

Does your library function manage a budget for the acquisition/purchase of or subscription etc. to library collections (both traditional and digital)?

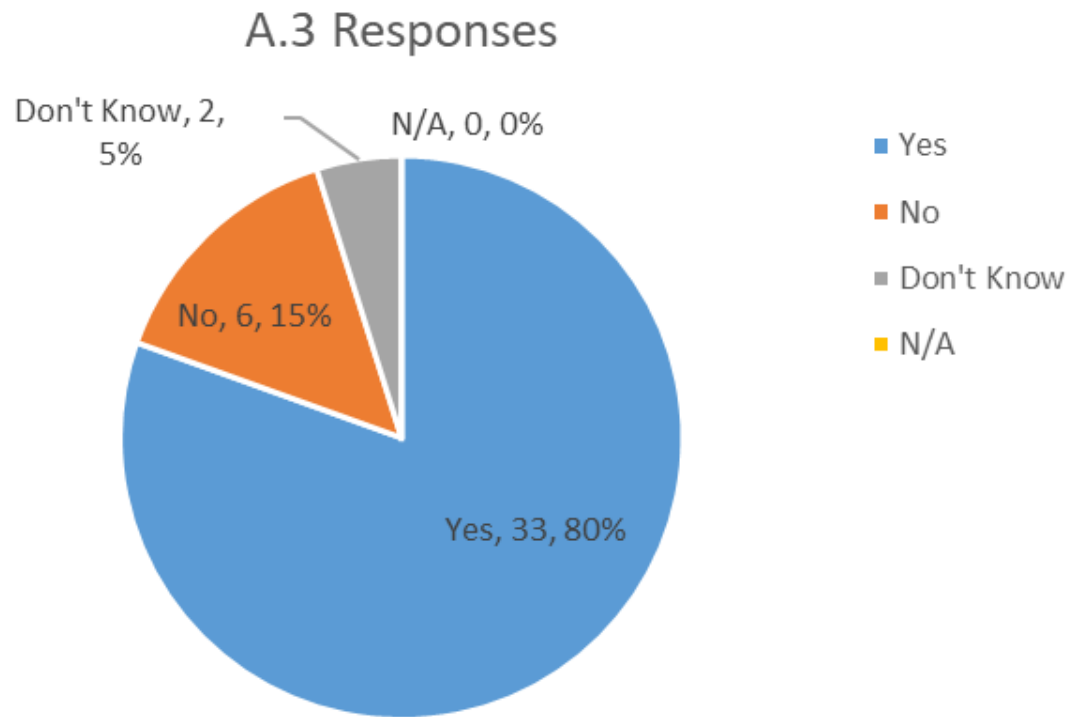
Decisions about acquisition of information resources



Question A.2

Is your library function responsible for deciding what information resources are acquired for the use of the library for both students and teaching/research staff?

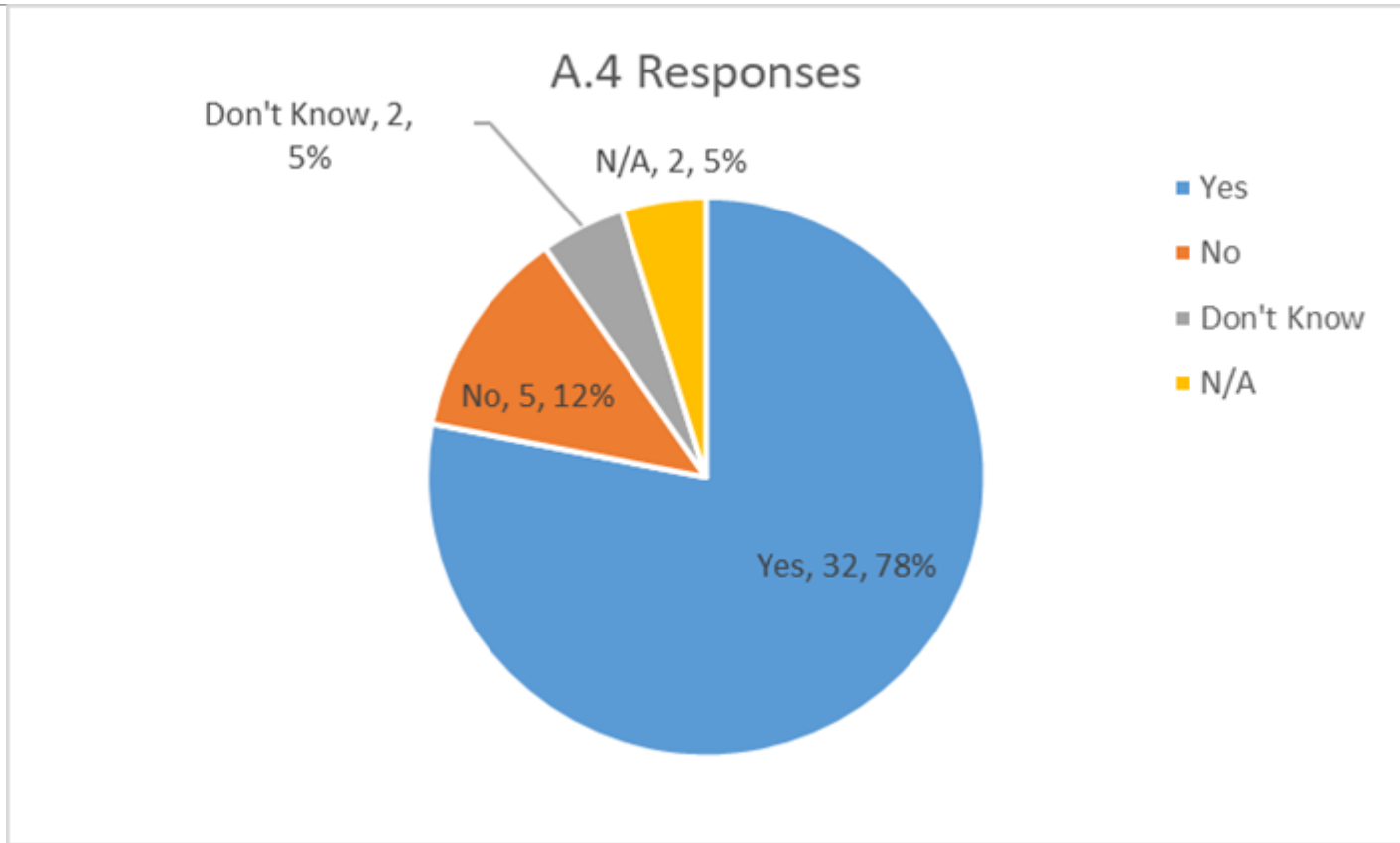
Decisions about acquisition of information resources



Question A.3

Does your library function make decisions about who is responsible for the management of digital information resources?

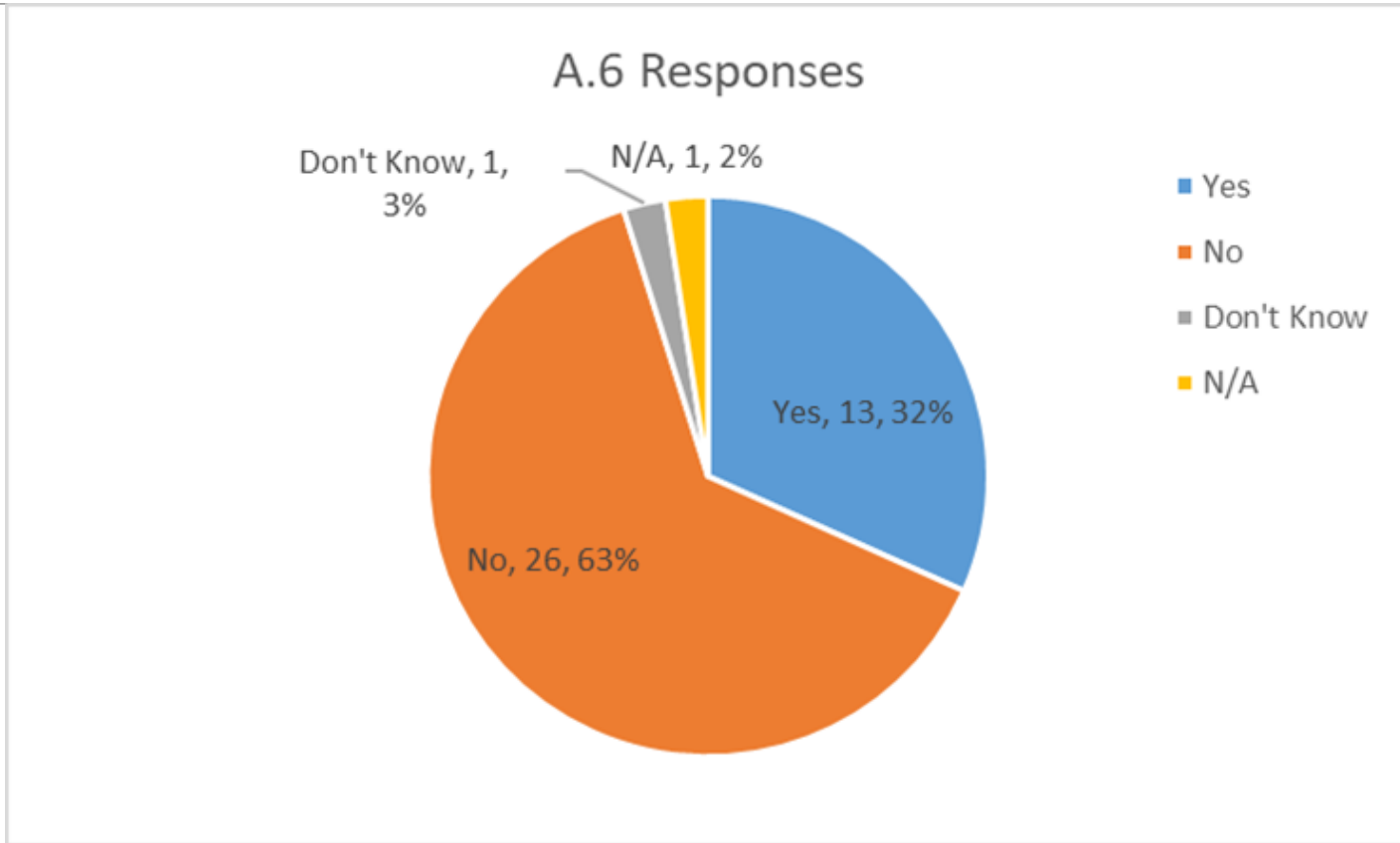
Decisions about Open Access Repositories



Question A.4

Does your library function make decisions on how or which Open Access repositories should be used in your institution?

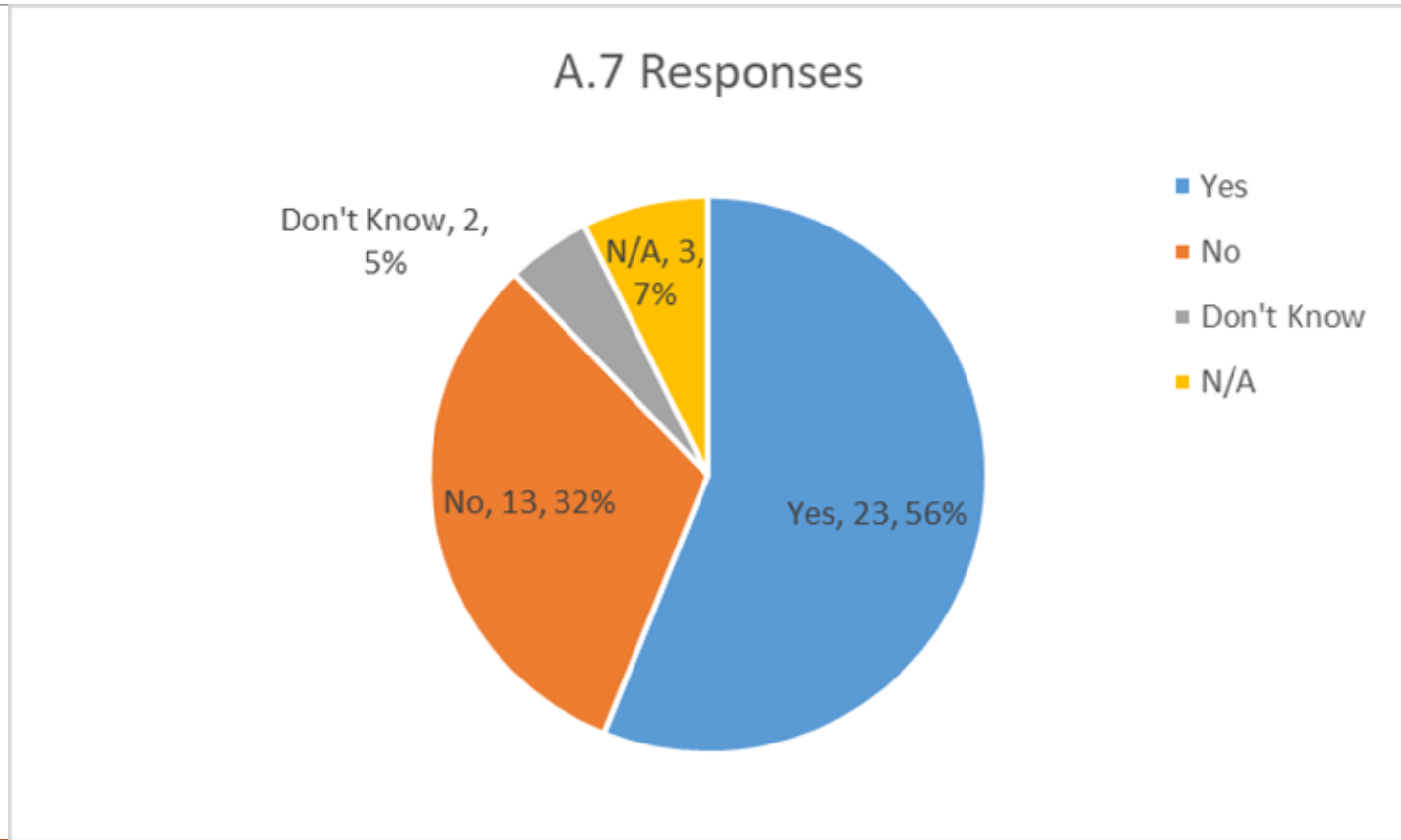
Decisions about allocation of digital infrastructure resources



Question A.6

Does your library function make decisions on the allocation of digital infrastructure resources, e.g. broadband entitlement, Internet access or similar infrastructure decisions?

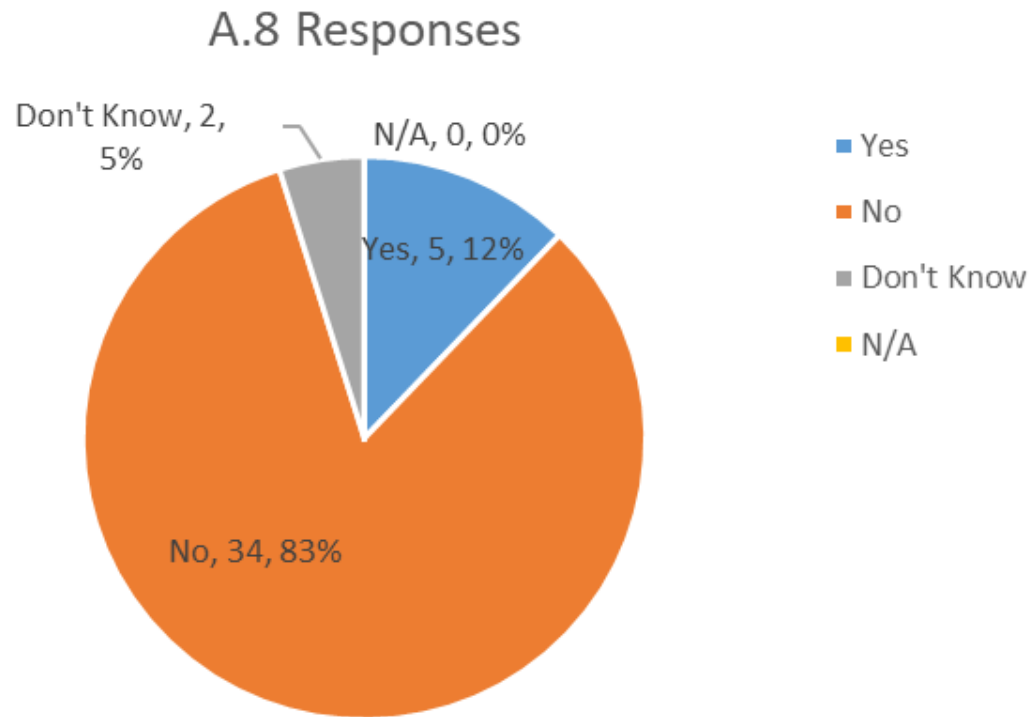
Decisions about information management policies



Question A.7

Does your library function make decisions about the policies regarding the security, integrity, privacy or accuracy of data kept in any digital repositories?

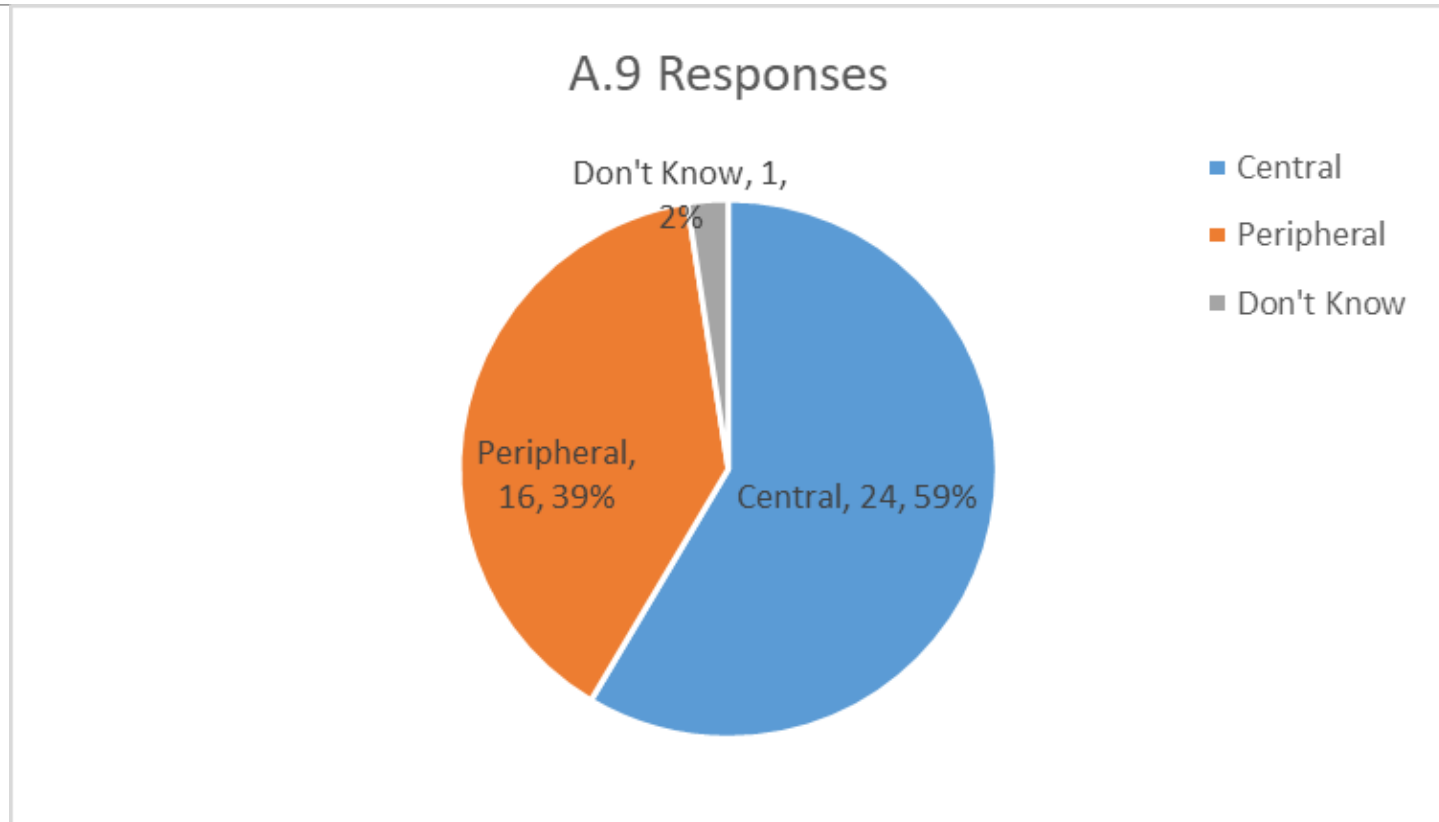
Funding for digital information resource management



Question A.8

Is there adequate funding for the management of digital information resources in your institution?

Library's Institutional role: central or peripheral?



Question A.9

Within the institution as a whole, is the role of the library considered central or peripheral?

Why central or peripheral role?

Central:

Established institutional role as service provider

Established support for teaching and learning

Main resource providers

Importance for accreditation

Independent access to financial resources

Peripheral:

Institutional irrelevance and unimportance

Lack of influence and visibility

Imposed institutional constraints such as finances and others

Approx. 3:2 *split* between Central and Peripheral responses

Ratio changes to 1:5 *split* when only Francophone countries considered and 4:1 *split* when only Anglophone countries considered

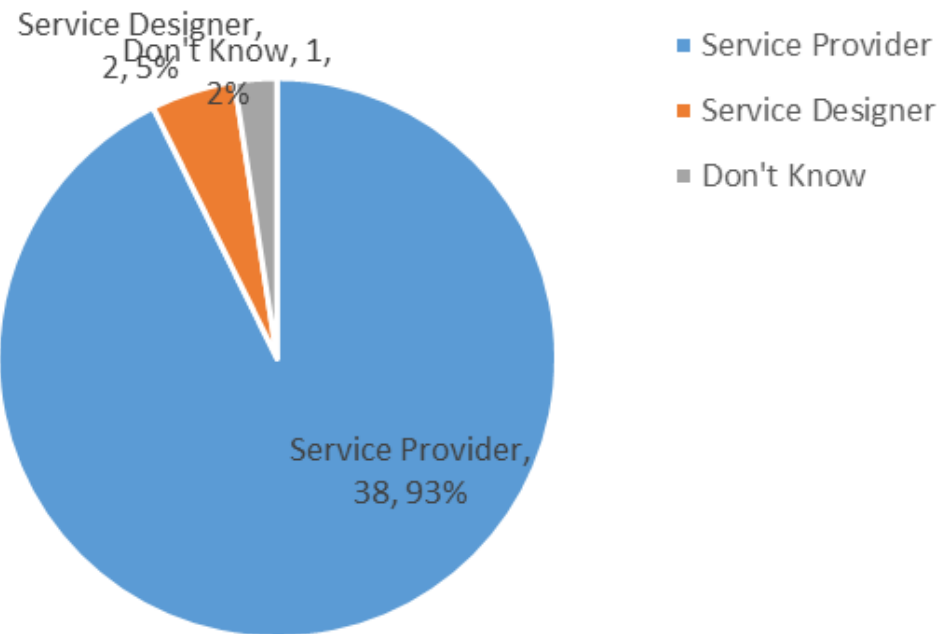
Library a Service Provider or a Service Designer?

Support for teaching and learning seen as library's main reason for being.

Service design was less recognised and more in terms of creating new social spaces.

Related to age split?

A.10 Responses

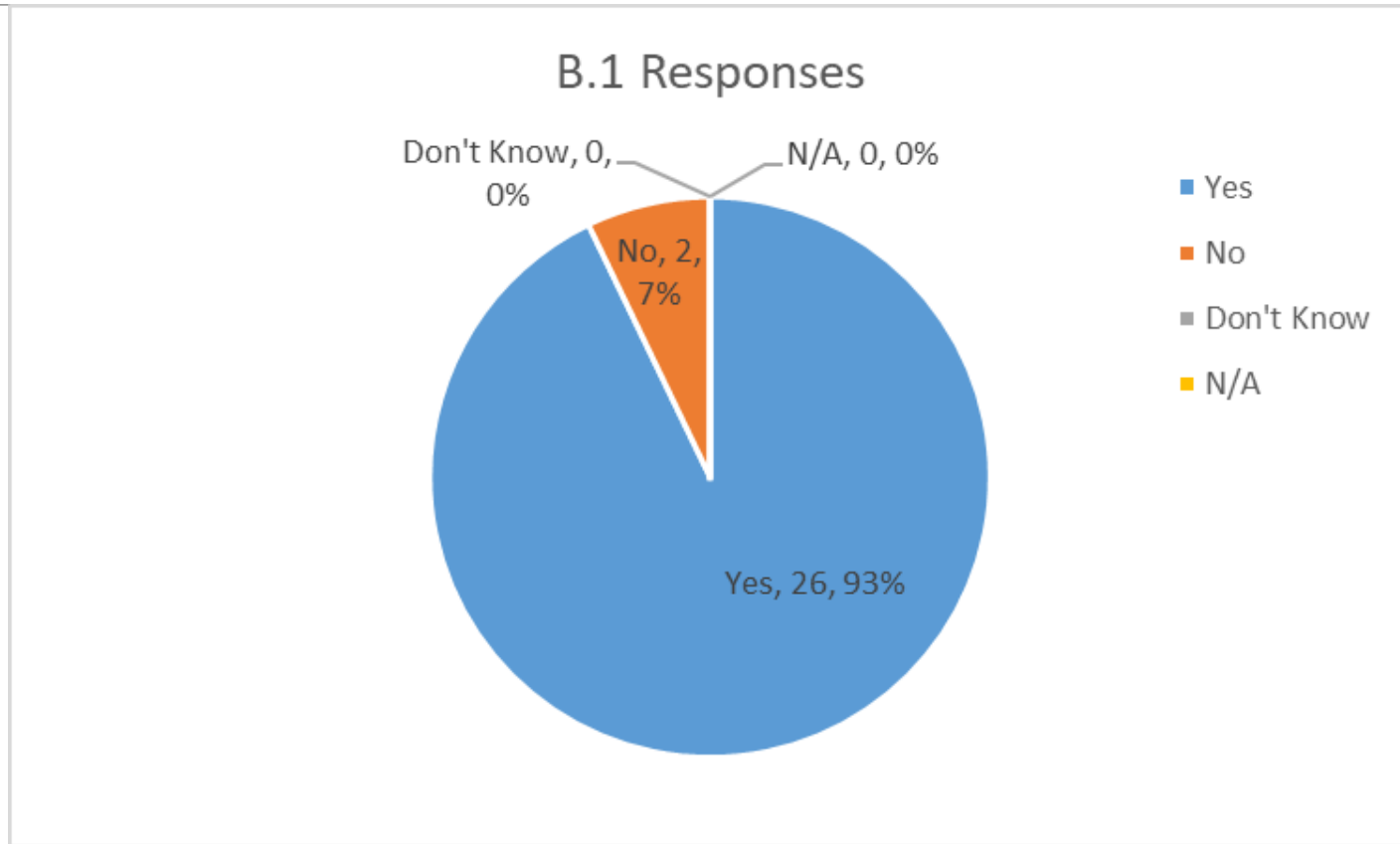


Question A.10

Is the library considered a service provider (support role) or a service designer (transformational role) in your institution?

Operational Function

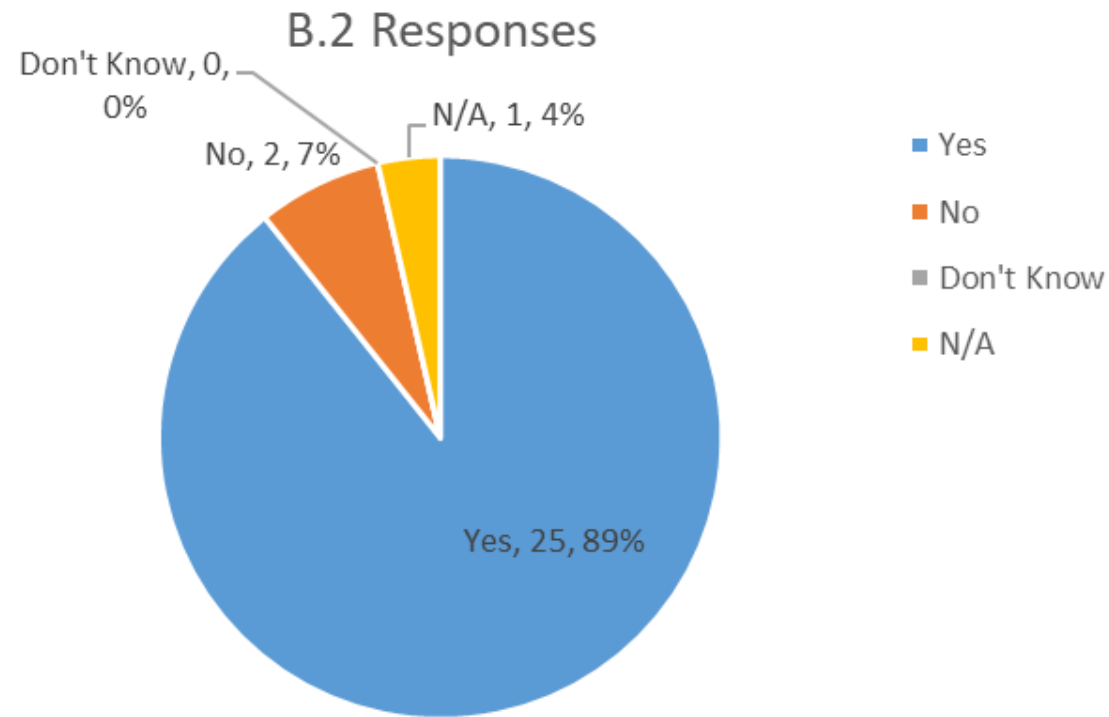
Managing digital resources



Question B.1

Does the work of your library function involve managing any digital resources, e.g. databases, digitized materials, digital collections of any sort?

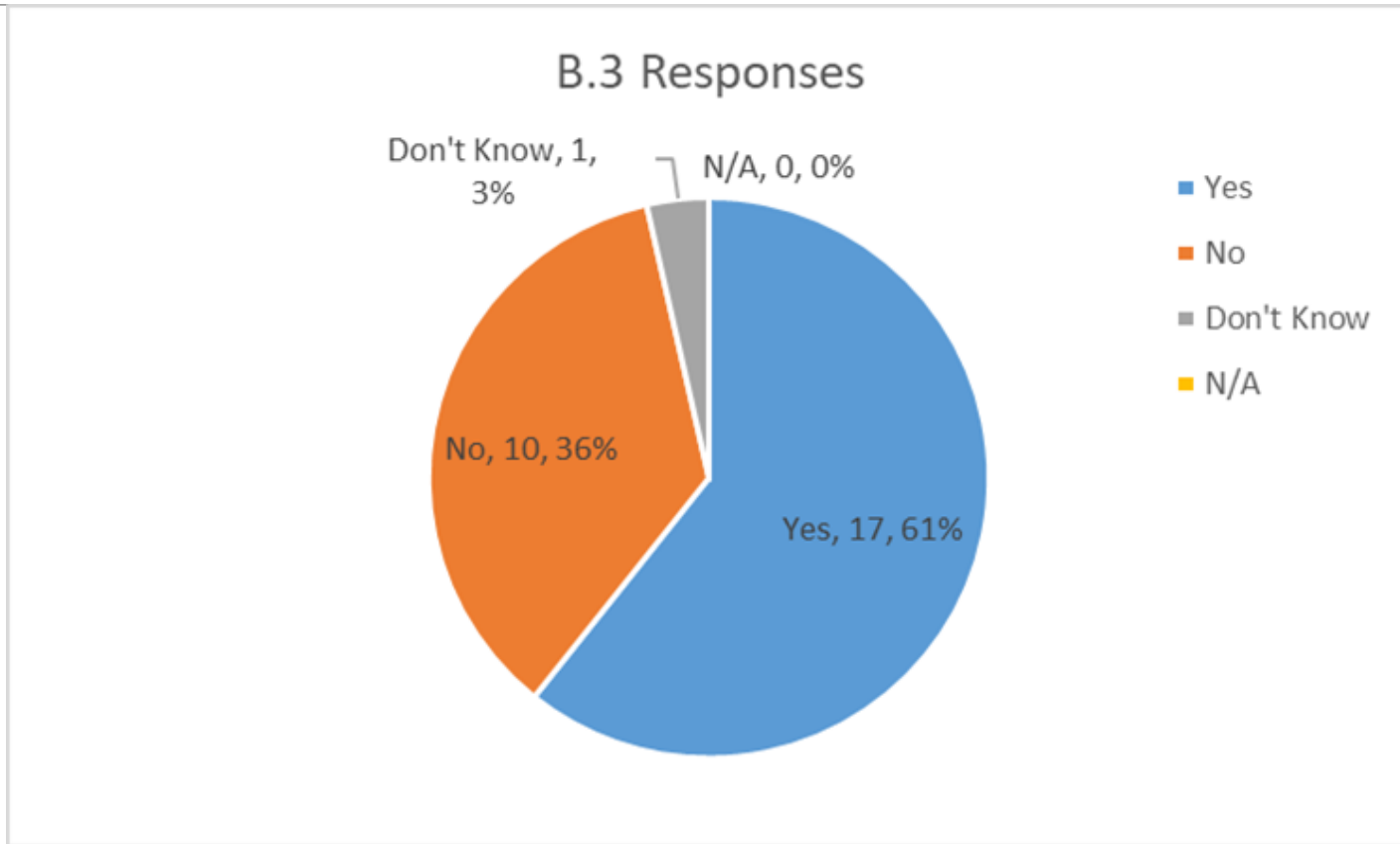
Use of automated information systems



Question B.2

Does your library function use automated library systems, e.g. automated card catalogues, library information systems etc.?

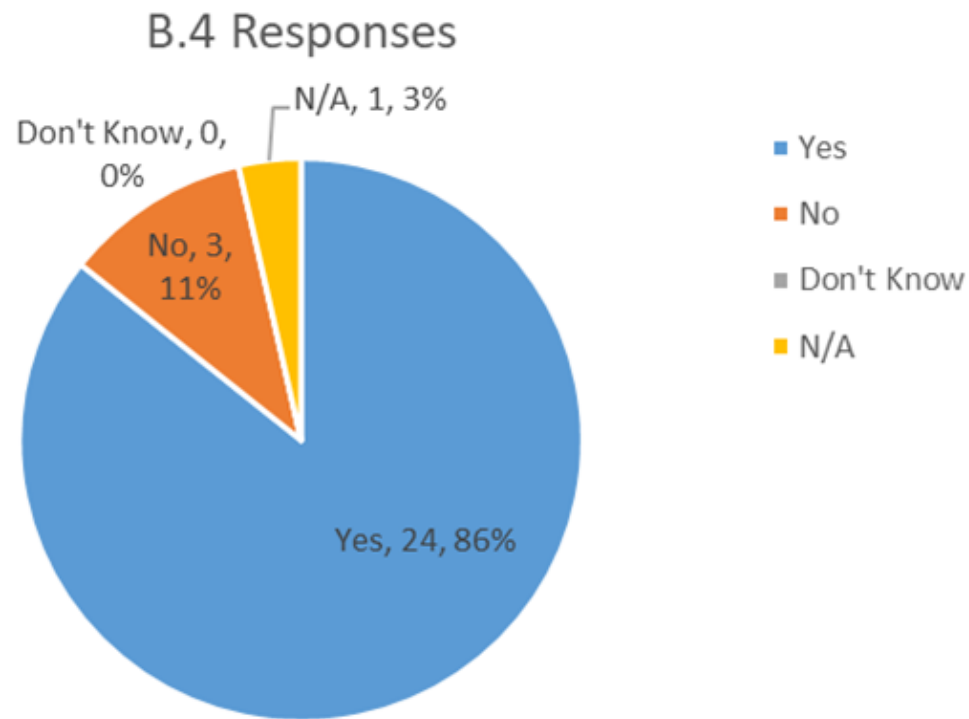
Managing digital research data repositories



Question B.3

Does your library function manage any digital repositories where research data are stored, e.g. figshare?

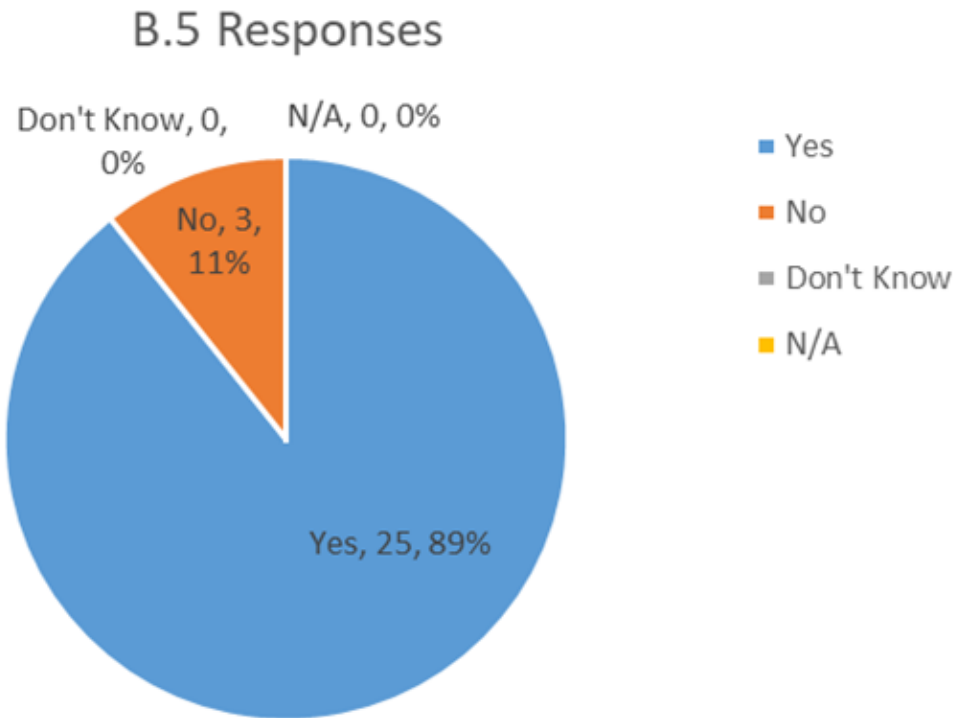
Managing Open Access research output repositories



Question B.4

Does your library function manage Open Access repositories where research outputs are stored e.g. Dspace?

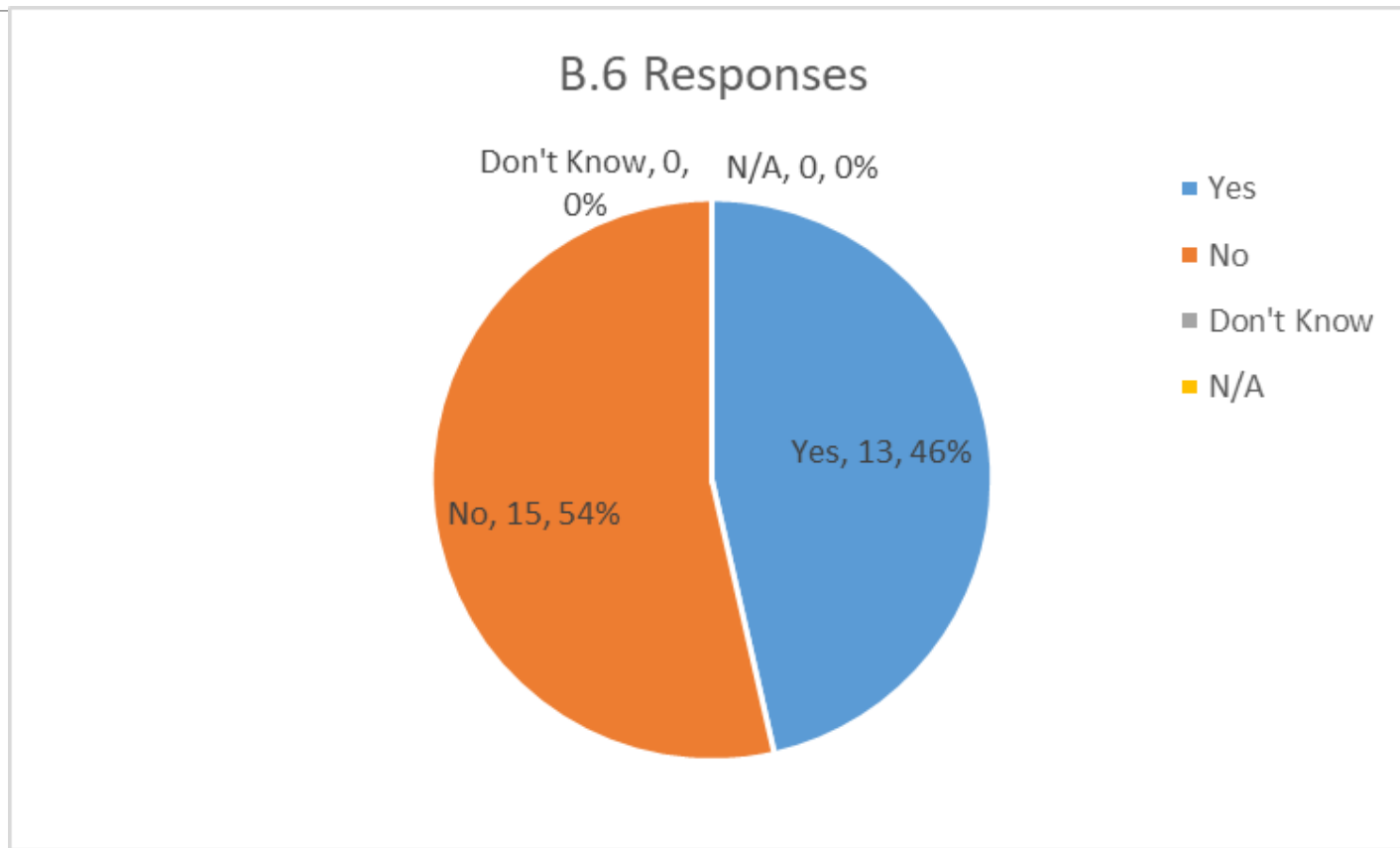
Information literacy support/training capability



Question B.5

Does your library function offer or support any training in information literacy?

Library involvement in distance or e-learning

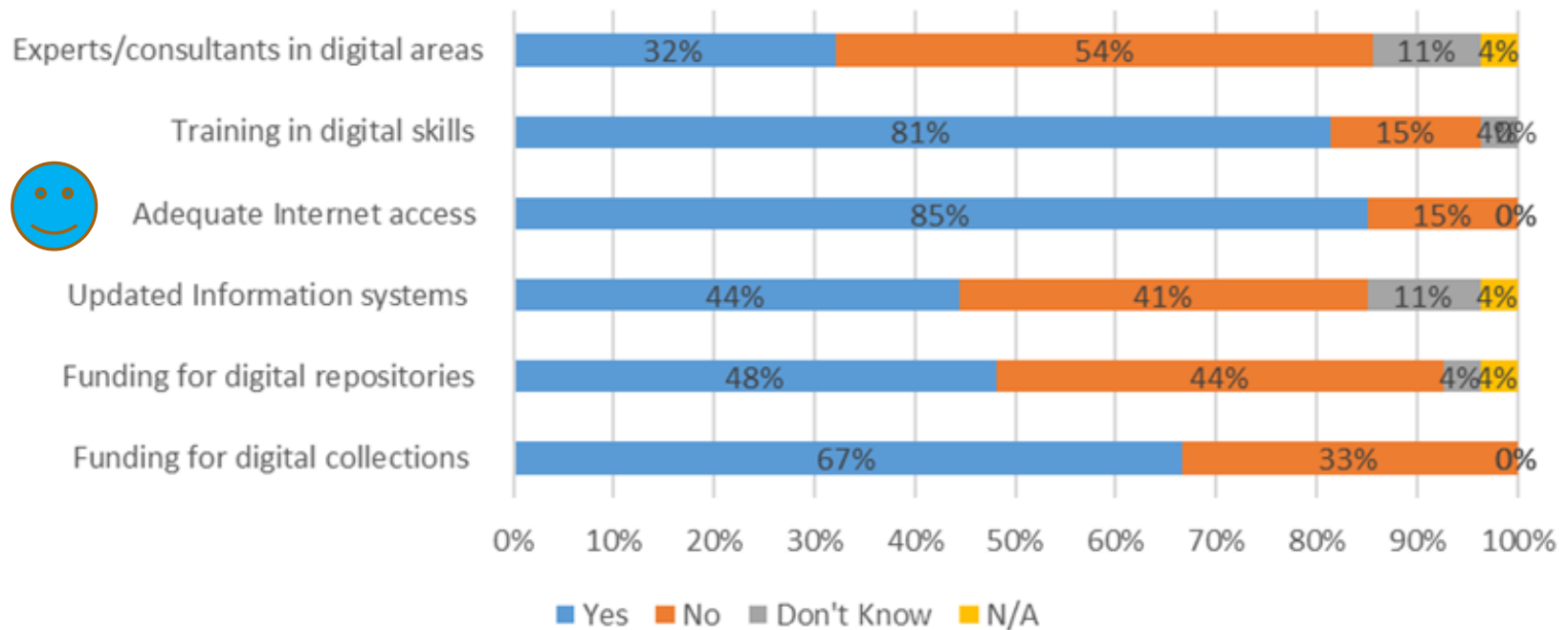


Question B.6

Is your library function involved in supporting or delivering taught modules via distance learning, e-learning or any learning platform using the Internet or computer networks?

Institutional Support

B.7 Responses by Percentages



Question B.7

What forms of support does your library function receive from the institution?

Most important operational resource? Issues?

Resources identified:

Electronic documents

Research access and distribution

Digital collections

Information systems

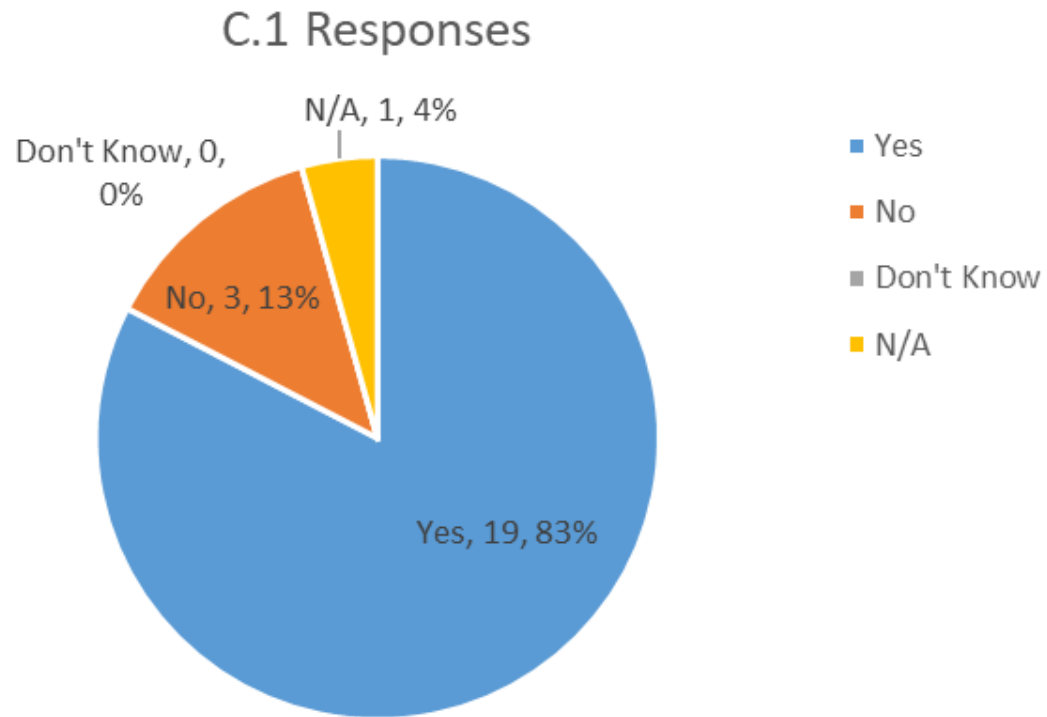
Print resources

Issues identified:

Amount and quality of access to electronic and print resources

Subject Specialist Function

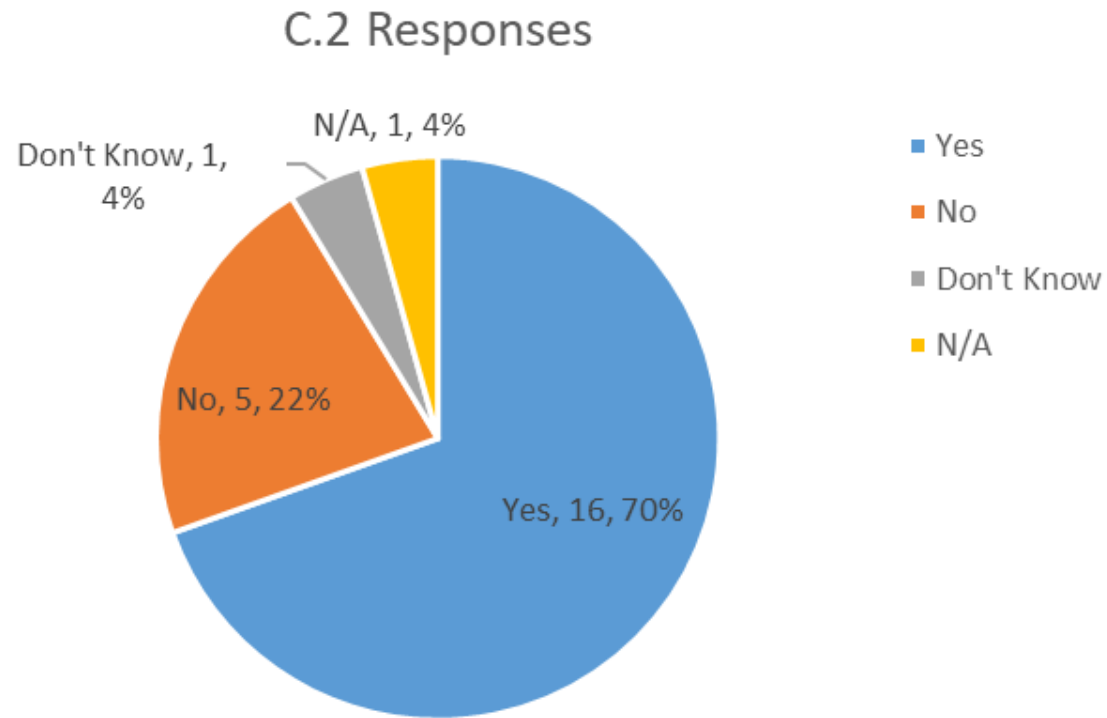
Digital collaboration with researchers



Question C.1

Does your library function collaborate with researchers using Internet resources or computer networks?

Digital collaboration with teaching staff



Question C.2

Does your library function collaborate with instructors using Internet resources or computer networks?

Most important subject specialist resource? Issues?

Resources identified:

Electronic documents

Digital collections

Information systems

Print resources

Institutional Repositories

End-user content creation

Online research access

Issues identified:

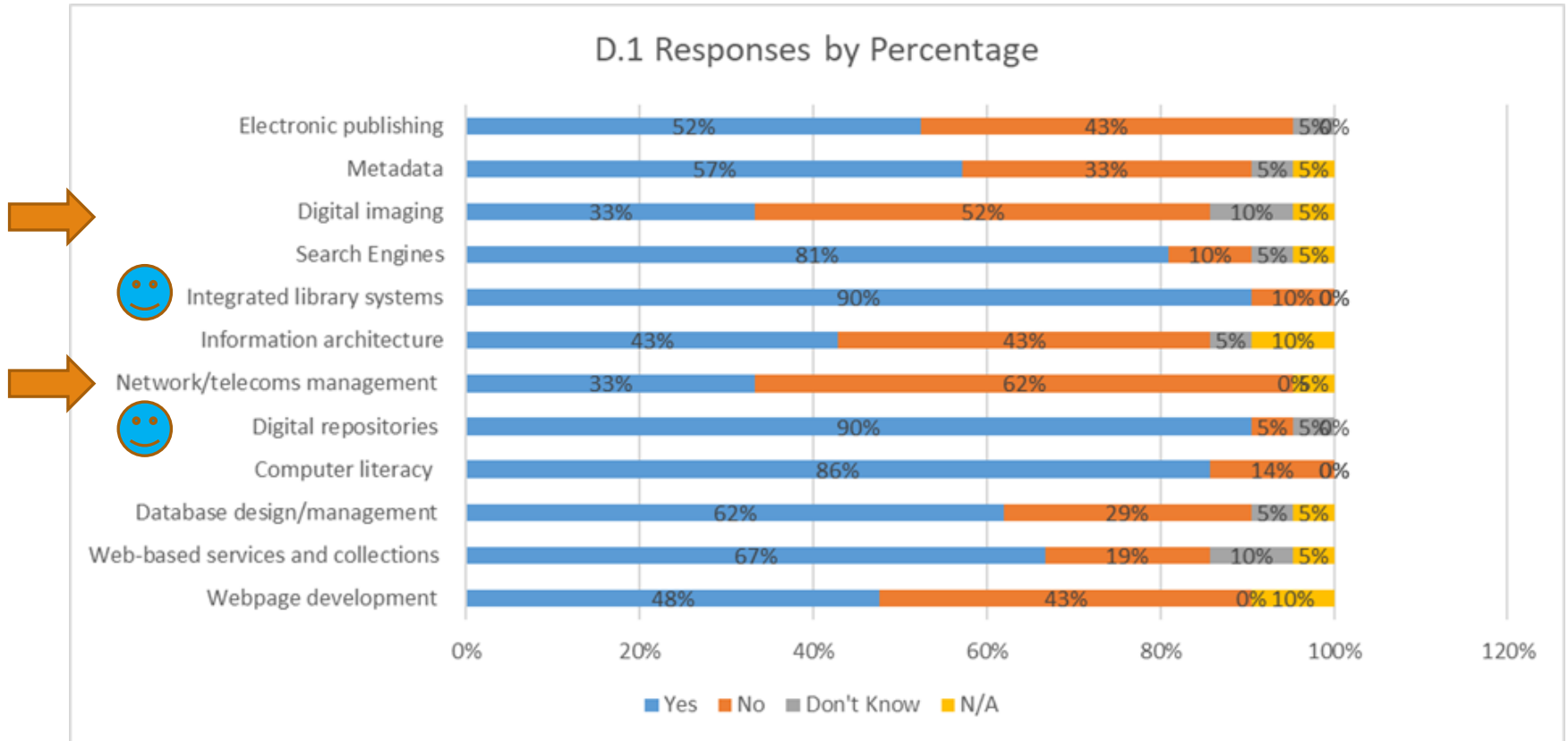
Restricted Internet access

Costs of access

Lack of human resources

Technical Function

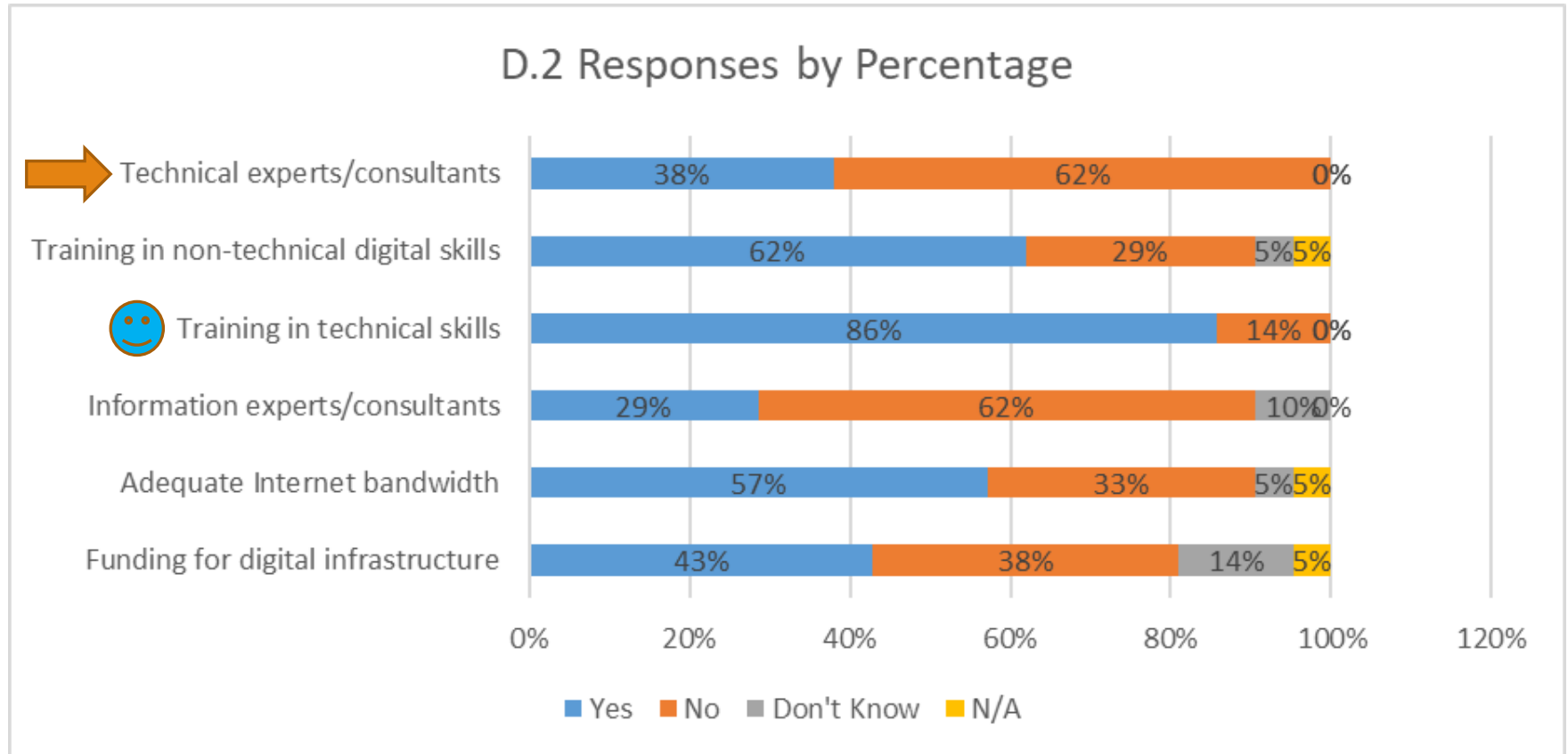
Main technical areas covered



Question D.1

Does your library function carry out work in any of these technical areas?

Main technical areas covered



Question D.2

What forms of support does your library function receive from the institution?

Decisions about digital infrastructure

Question D.3

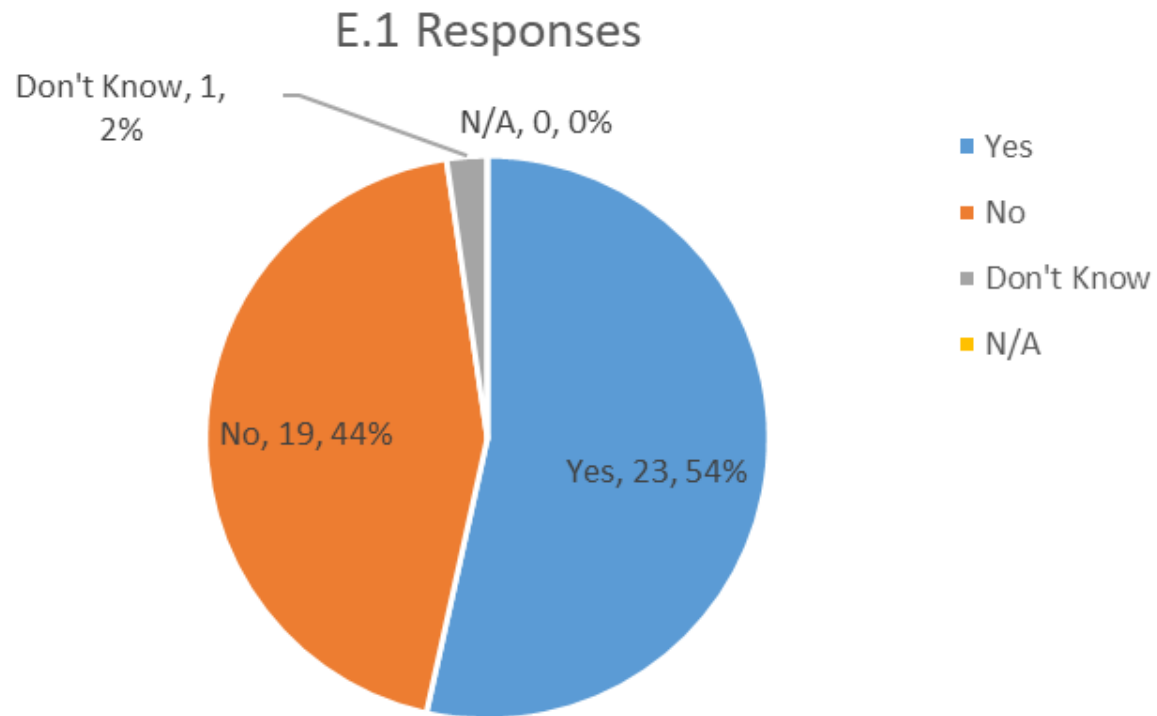
**Who makes decisions about digital infrastructure in your institution?
E.g. amount of funding, access rights, procurement, etc.**

Analysis:

- **The library has a role to play in these decisions in most of the responses.**
- **In addition, the senior management, ICT function are also involved in most decisions.**
- **In one case a complex arrangement of Education, ICT, Library and Management seem to make the decisions.**
- **In a few cases it is only the senior management.**

Librarian Skills Development

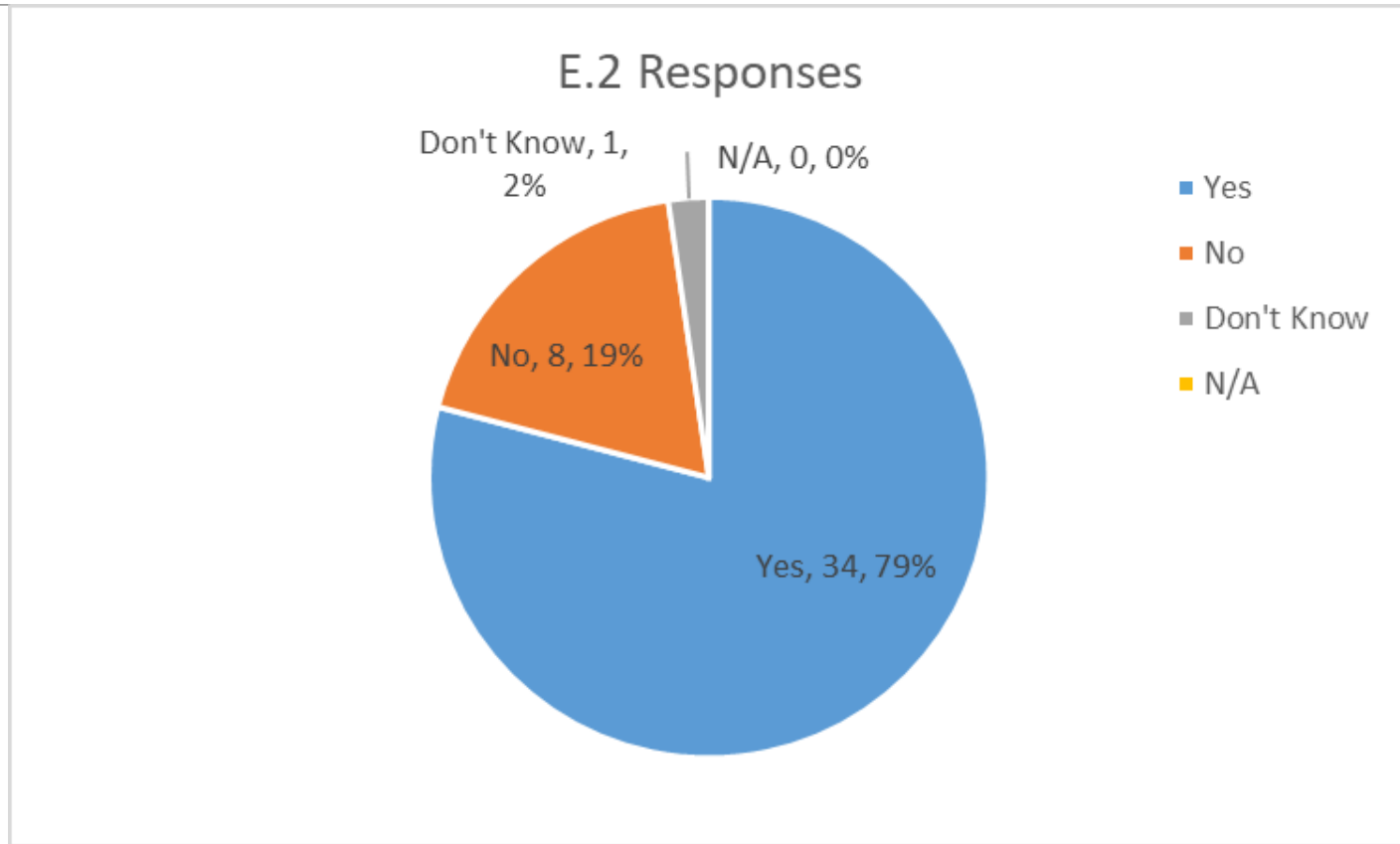
Institutional support for formal librarianship training



Question E.1

Does your institution teach librarianship as a formal subject area?

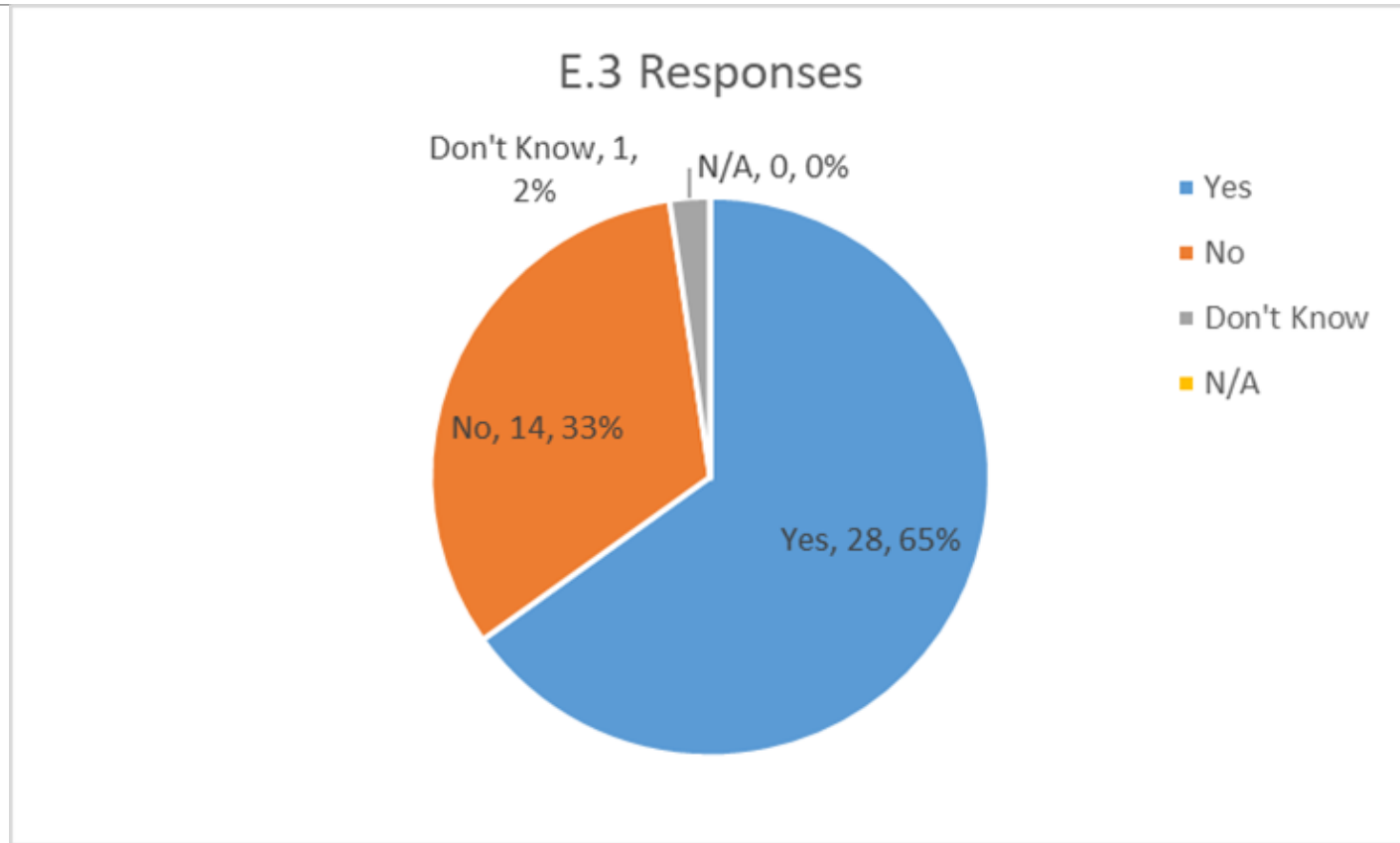
Continuing professional development – general skills



Question E.2

Do you have access to continuing professional development in your skill area?

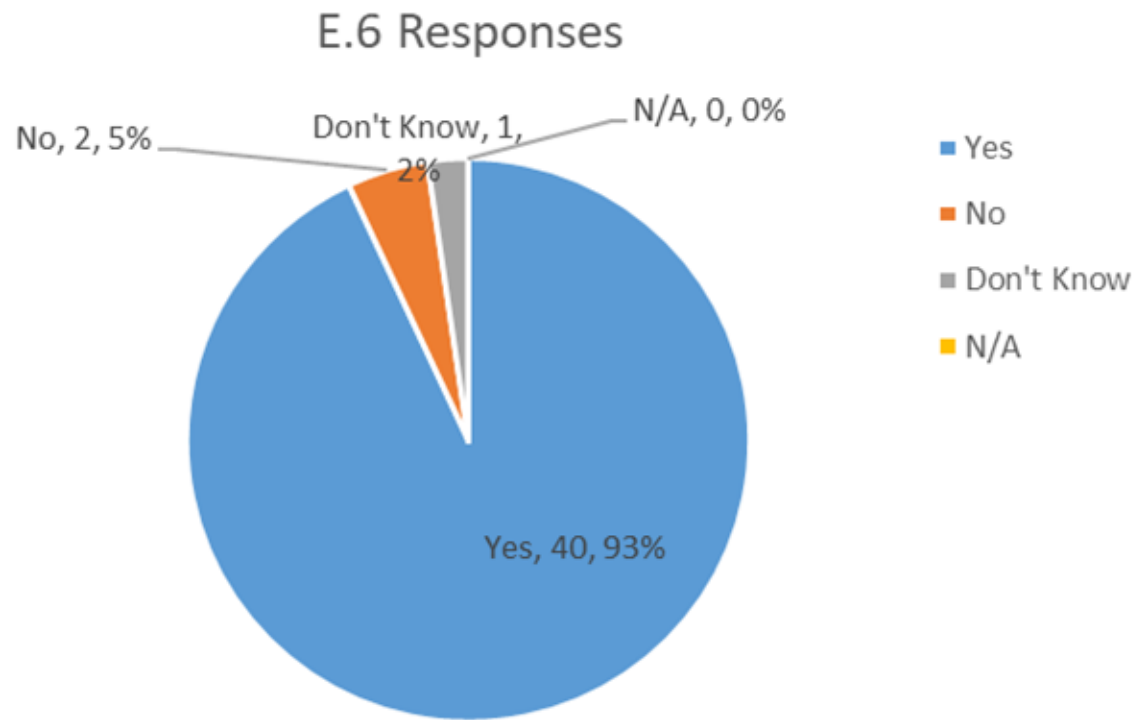
Continuing professional development – digital skills



Question E.3

Do you have access to continuing professional development of digital library skills, e.g. learning about new digital repositories and how to manage them?

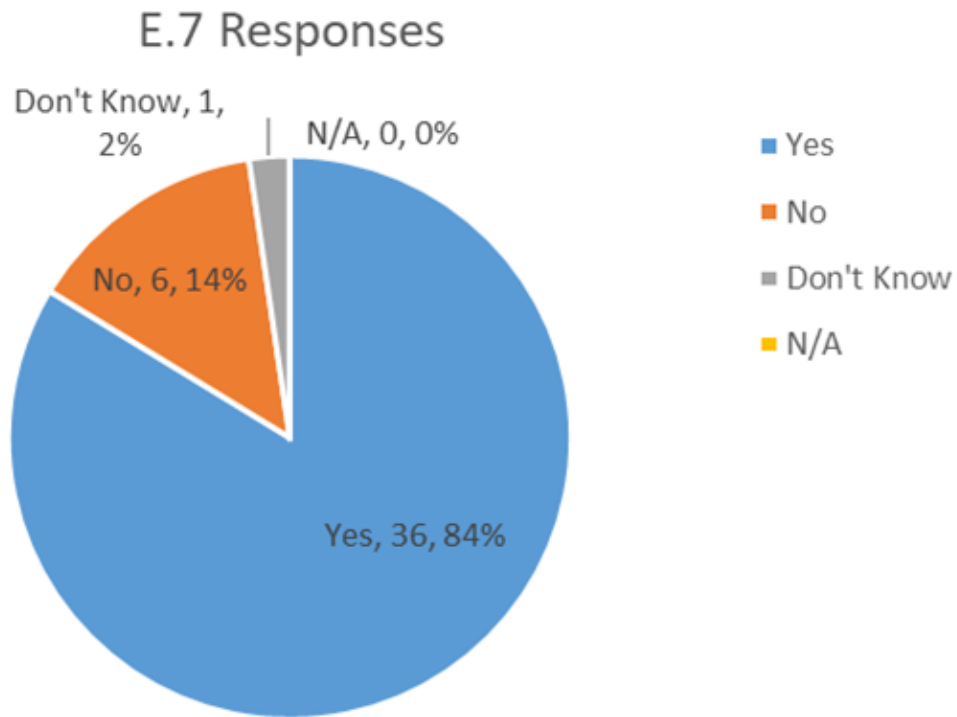
Awareness of Open movement initiatives



Question E.6

Are you aware of the open movement, e.g. Open Access, Open Science, Open Data?

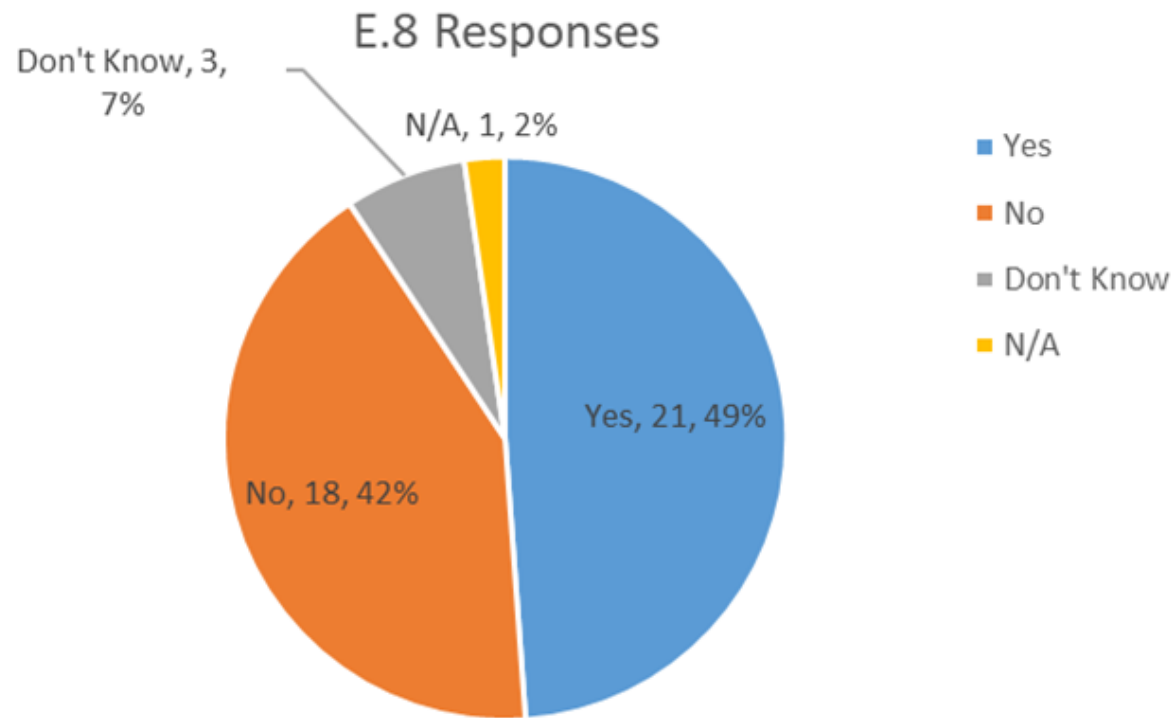
Use of Open access repositories



Question E.7

Do you use any Open Access repositories?

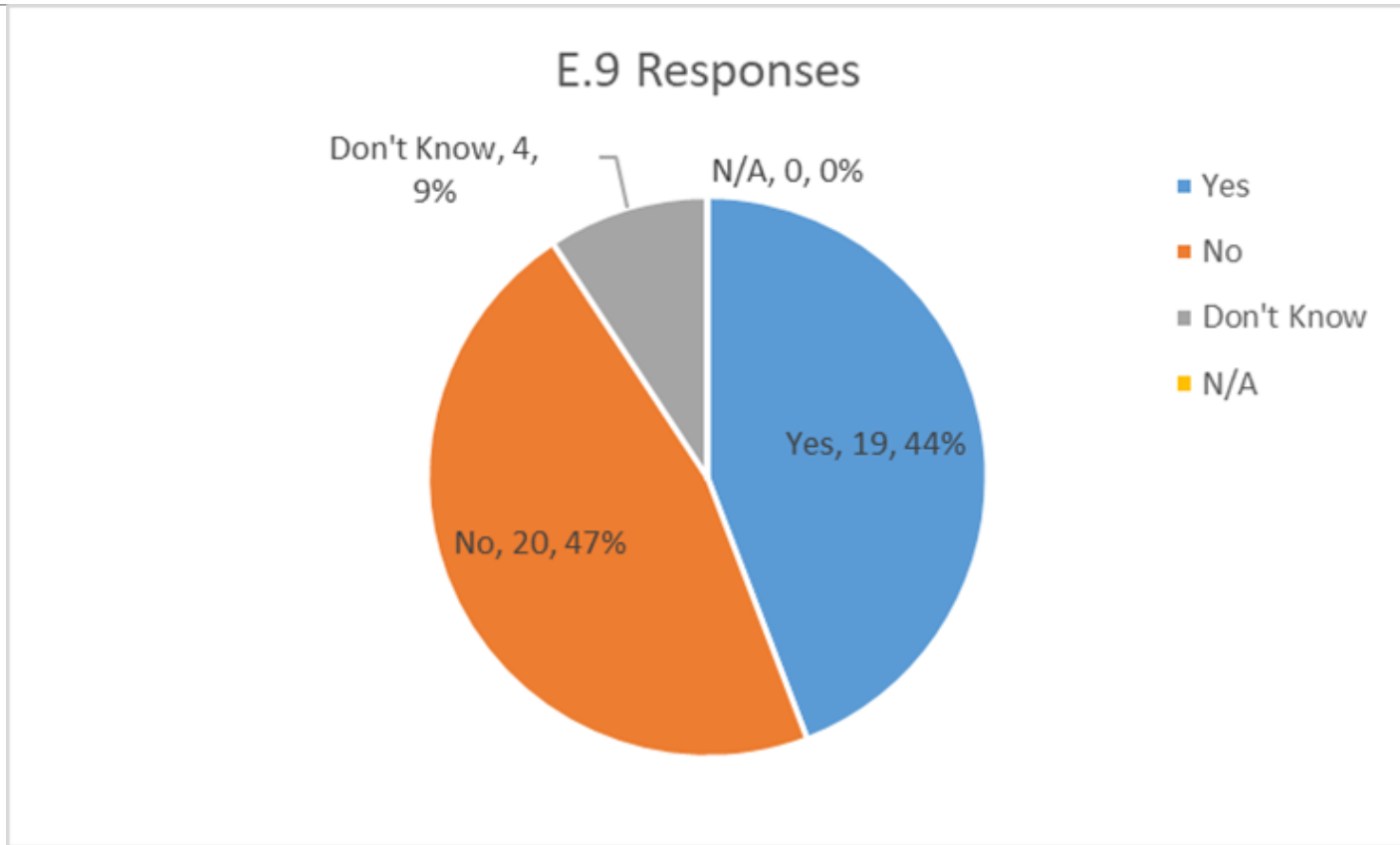
Use of Open science platforms



Question E.8

Do you use any Open Science platforms?

Use of Open data repositories



Question E.9

Do you use any Open Data repositories?

Evolving Role of the Library/Librarian

Automation of service role

Little emphasis on change/revolution

- Emphasis still on support for teaching and learning
- Support in terms of training

Ubiquity/sharing of resources

- Anytime anyplace access and sharing

Changes to practice

- Collaborative role
- Information literacy/retrieval
- Access to publishing (online/data repositories)
- Advocacy
- Academic qualifications

Evolving Role of the Library/Librarian

Identity – how librarians identify with their evolving roles

- Advocate
- Evolving professional – continually updating skills, research-led
- Innovator and leader
- Generalist – non-traditional professional areas
- Information specialist – information-related skills
- Senior academic role (on par with)
- Digital technologist
- Embedded professional – collaborator with researchers/curriculum development
- Policy influencers
- Information mediator
- Research consultant
- Knowledge creators/constructors
- Information and knowledge workers
- Technology aggregators
- Designer

Identified Issues

Future vision of library and librarian roles still embedded in tradition and conventions of the past

Technology used mainly as support to traditional roles, not as creator of innovative practices

Main institutional weaknesses revolve around funding, infrastructure, library influence at policy level, lack of investment in library's involvement in technology enhanced learning initiatives

Training opportunities available for digital skills but lack of external expertise/consultancy which sometimes catalyses change

More librarian involvement in Open movement initiatives would help to catalyse change

Advocacy, information management, service transformation leadership are all aspects that need attention and development,

Next Steps

The pilot gives inconclusive conclusions to some of the main objectives of the project

The scope needs to be increased across the region so as to gain a more balanced view of the issues affecting HEI librarians across the region

A country-breakdown by issue would then be more possible

A complementary programme of interviews and focus groups is needed since some issues need deeper exploration to understand better

Funding is being sought to address the further roll-out and expansion of this research.

Questions ?