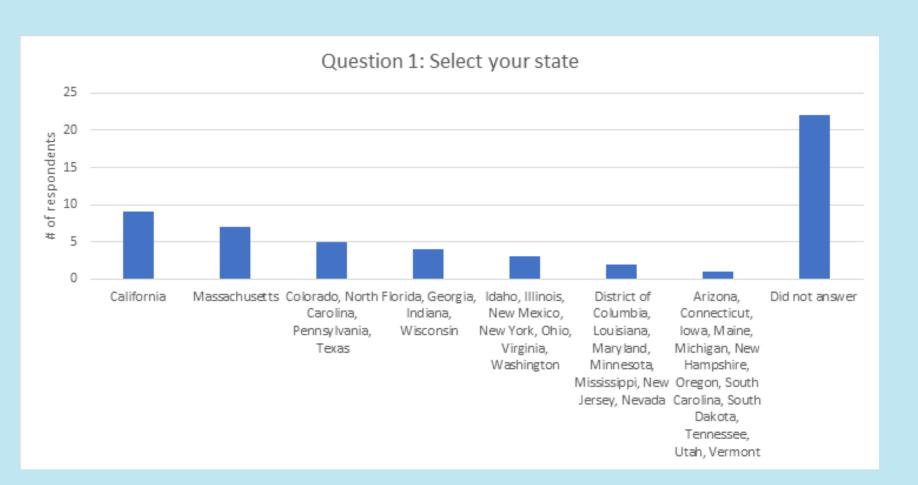# Common Practices adopted by Access Service Departments in Response to COVID-19
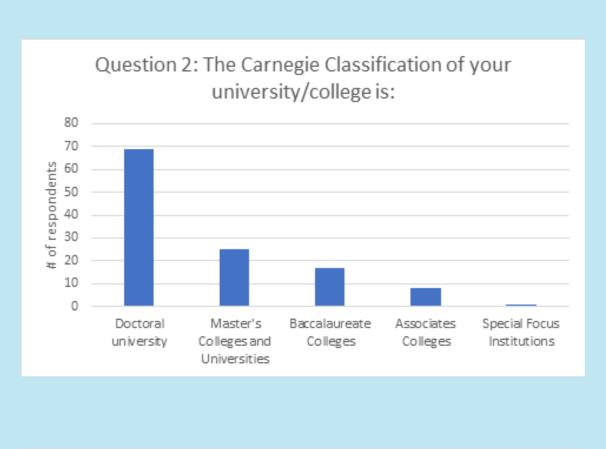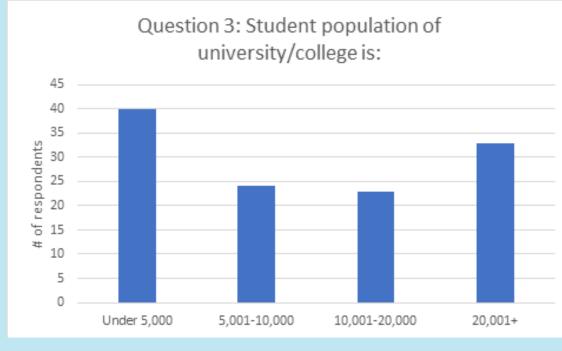
Survey methodology

- A 32-question survey was prepared on the policies and procedures adopted by access services departments in academic libraries during the initial stages of COVID-19, March to May 2020.
- The survey used the Qualtrics online software program, was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board, and was trial tested and modified before being distributed.
- A call for participation was sent to the Library Circulation and Related Issues mailing list (Lib-Circplus@princeton.edu) and the ACRL Access Services Interest Group discussion group (acr-igas@lists.ala.org). The email requested participation by individuals at academic libraries and included the URL link to the survey website.
- The survey was available for completion for two weeks from July 14-July 31, 2020.
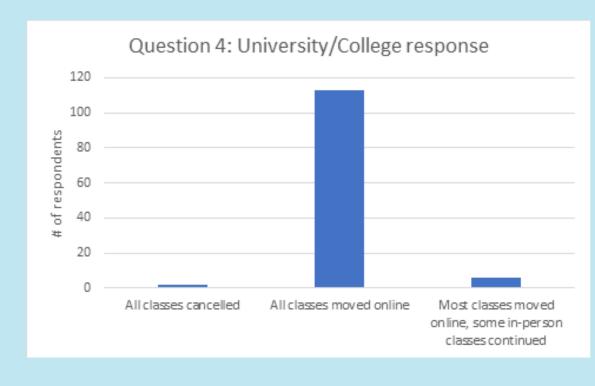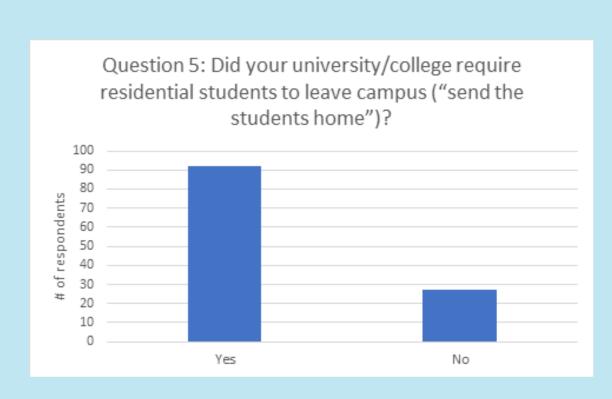- 121 respondents completed the survey

During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, access services departments in academic libraries had to quickly develop and implement new policies and procedures to meet the challenges of providing patron service as their institutions switched to online classes and sent the students home. This poster session will present the commonly implemented practices in access services departments based on the results of an online survey of more than 100 academic libraries from across the United States. These practices include procedures adopted for staffing, fines/due dates, new services for return of materials, quarantine periods, interlibrary loan and reserves, and delivery of materials to patrons.

Common Practices

The survey determined a core set of practices adopted by the Access Services departments at academic libraries. The procedures adopted by each department were impacted by the severity of the pandemic in their state, the policies mandated by the state government, and the policies implemented by the university/college administration.

Common Practices

- library buildings were closed to patrons
- access services personnel worked remotely
- some respondents had some staff work partially in the building, often with personnel adopting a limited staggered schedule to rotate in-person and remote
- online assistance was available for users
- access services departments did not require patrons to return materials
- due dates were extended
- library fines or fees were suspended
- departments accept return of borrowed materials and delivery of interlibrary loans
- returned materials were quarantine for a designated period
- small majority of respondents provided interlibrary loan borrowing/lending and added items to electronic reserves
- departments stopped adding materials to physical reserves collections
- most libraries did not provide items from the physical collection to patrons, either by mail or as a "curbside service."
- respondents scanned or copied from the collection for patrons for electronic delivery.

Survey questions and results

Description of survey participants

Question 1: Select your state

Question 2: The Carnegie Classification of your university/college is:

Question 3: Student population of university/college is:

Question 4: University/College response

Question 5: Did your university/college require residential students to leave campus ("send the students home")?

Library building and staffing

Question 6: During the initial stage of Covid-19 was your physical library building:
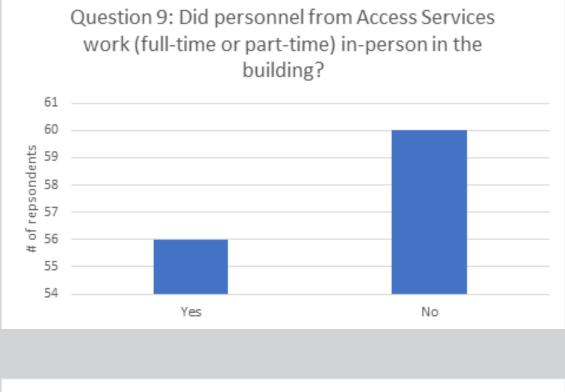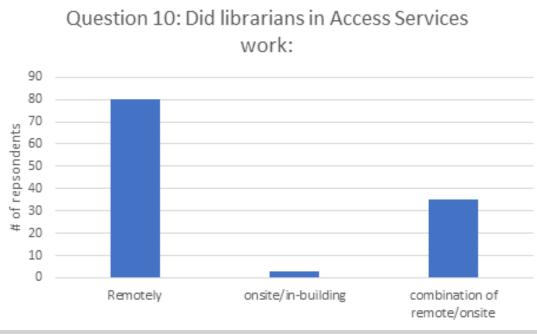
Question 7: If your library building remained open or partially open, indicate which patrons groups used the facility?

- libraries that were open/partially open indicated they were open to building entry by faculty, students, and university staff
- 3 respondents reported that they in addition allowed community patrons access to their library building

Question 8: If your library building was closed to patrons, what hours was the Access Services considered "open" for patron assistance?
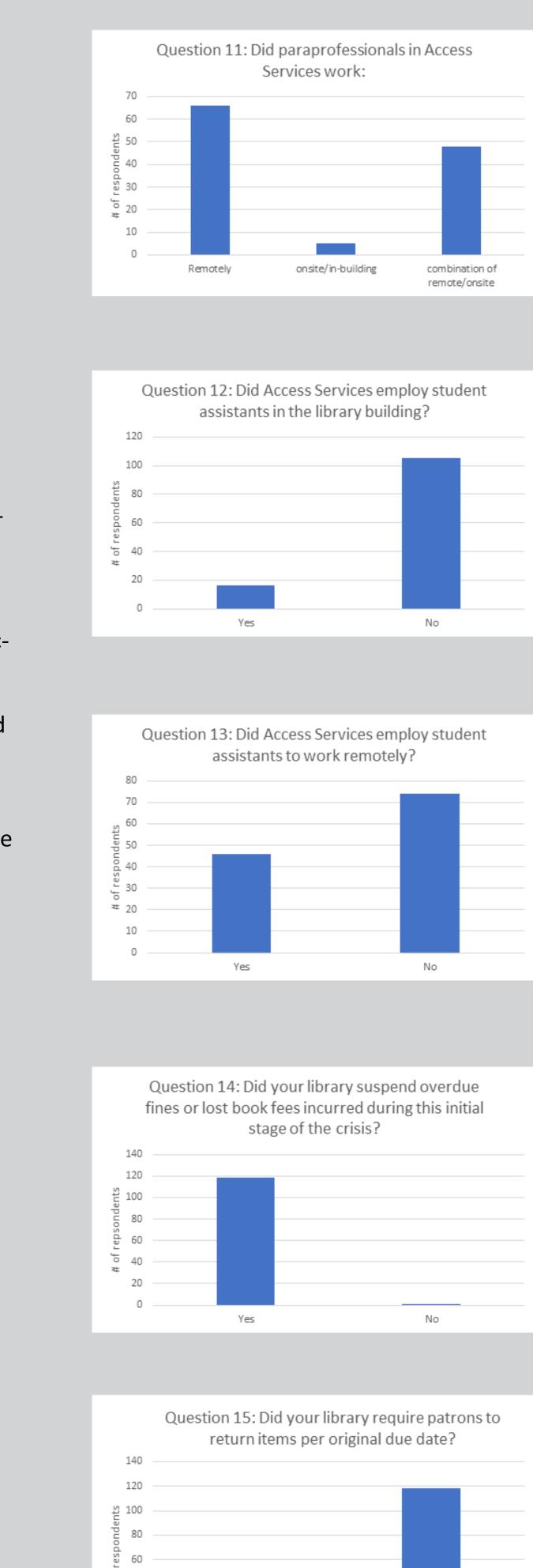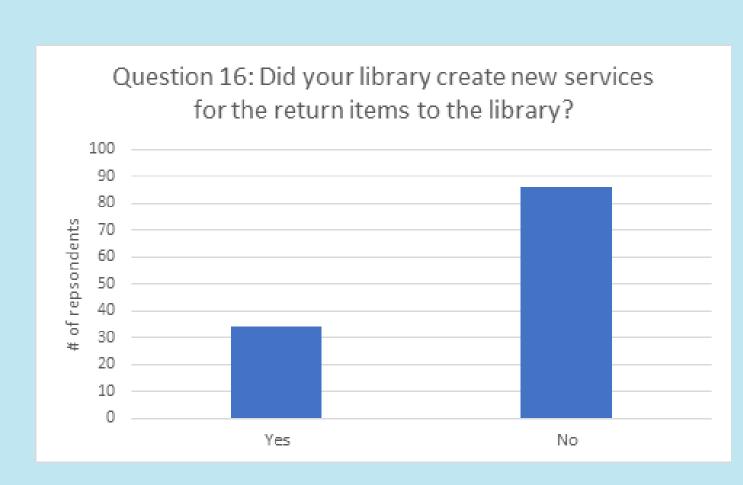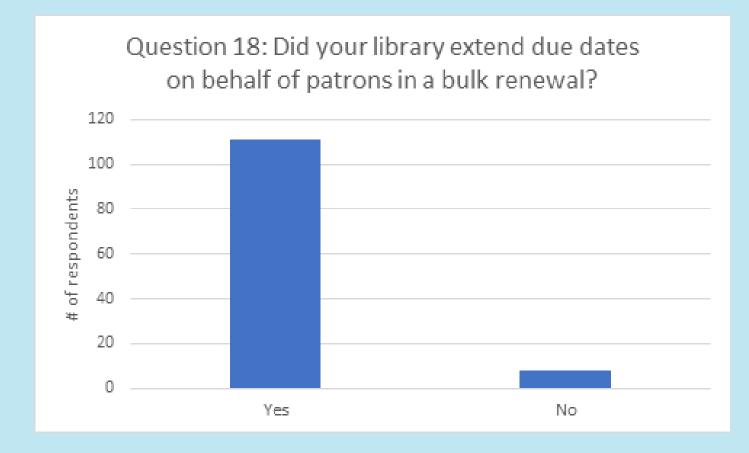
- hours that the departments were considered "open" for public service varied
- 50 respondents indicated they were open Monday to Friday during regular business hours (roughly 8am-5pm)
- 19 respondents were open Monday to Friday for hours that extended into the evening
- 4 respondents were additionally open on weekends
- 6 respondents only available for patron assistance for a few hours per day or by appointment
- 9 respondents were unavailable for public assistance

Question 9: Did personnel from Access Services work (full-time or part-time) in-person in the building?

Question 10: Did librarians in Access Services work:

Question 11: Did paraprofessionals in Access Services work:

Question 12: Did Access Services employ student assistants in the library building?

Question 13: Did Access Services employ student assistants to work remotely?

Question 14: Did your library suspend overdue fines or lost book fees incurred during this initial stage of the crisis?

Question 15: Did your library require patrons to return items per original due date?

Due dates, fines, and book return
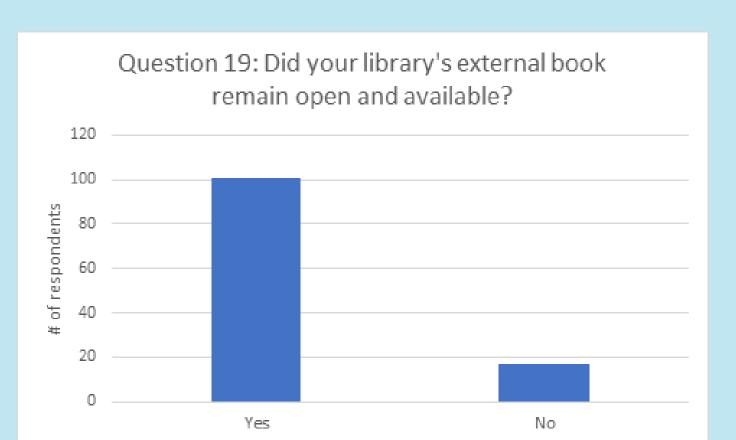
Question 16: Did your library create new services for the return items to the library?
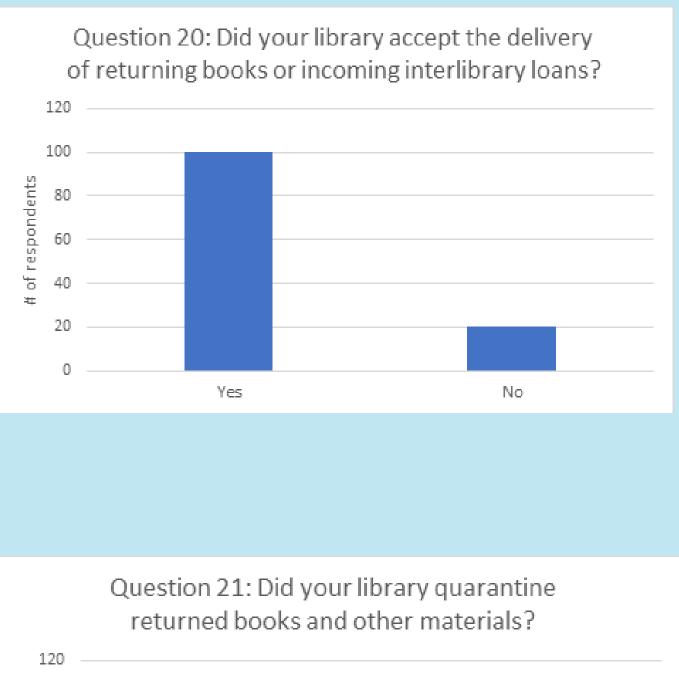
Question 17: Please describe the new service.

- Several respondents reported creating new services to assist students with returning borrowed library materials
- new drop locations across campus when the students were moving out
- working with partner libraries across their state to encourage the return at any participating library
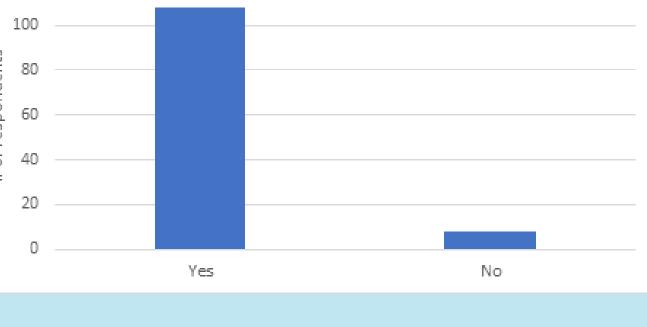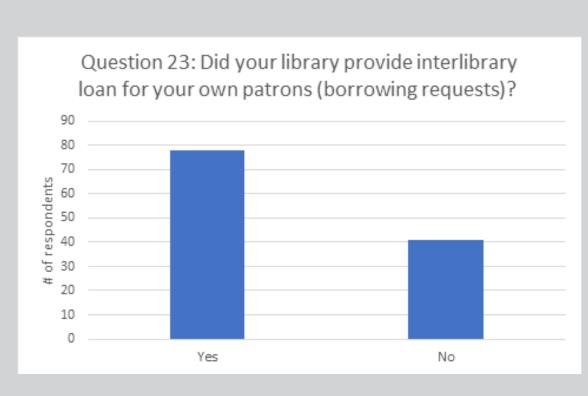- providing free shipping for students to return materials using pre-paid mailers or a courier service

Question 18: Did your library extend due dates on behalf of patrons in a bulk renewal?

Question 19: Did your library's external book remain open and available?

Question 20: Did your library accept the delivery of returning books or incoming interlibrary loans?

Question 21: Did your library quarantine returned books and other materials?

Question 22: If yes, for how long were library books and other materials quarantined?

Interlibrary loan and reserves

Question 23: Did your library provide interlibrary loan for your own patrons (borrowing requests)?
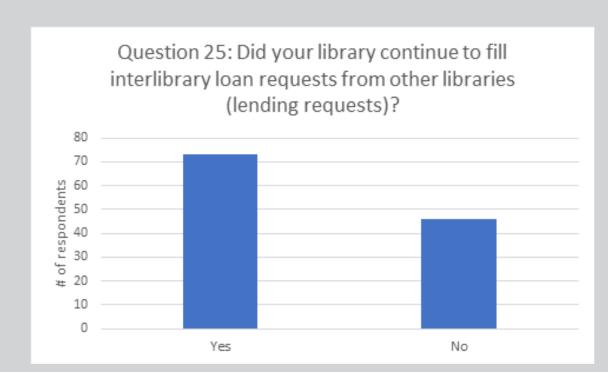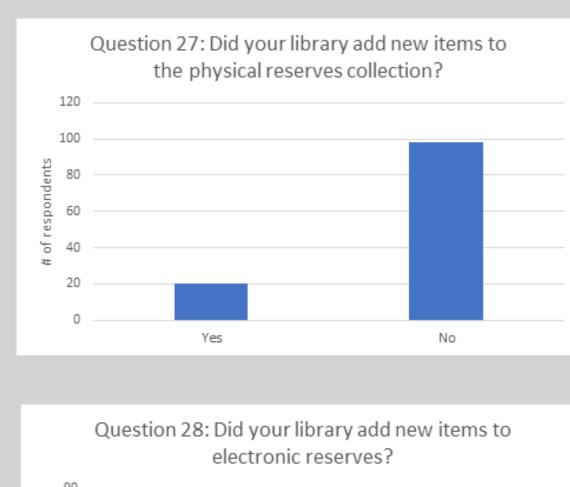
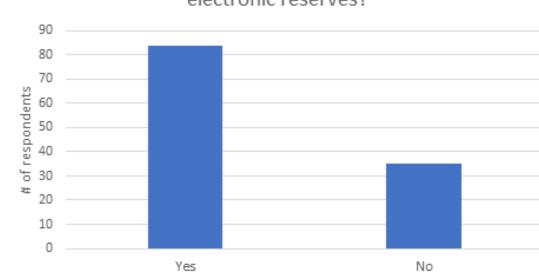Question 24: Indicate all item types were requested via interlibrary loan (borrowing):

- 62 respondents borrowed items only in electronic formats (articles, chapters, and e-books)
- other respondents indicated borrowing requests were submitted for both electronic and physical items

Question 25: Did your library continue to fill interlibrary loan requests from other libraries (lending requests)?
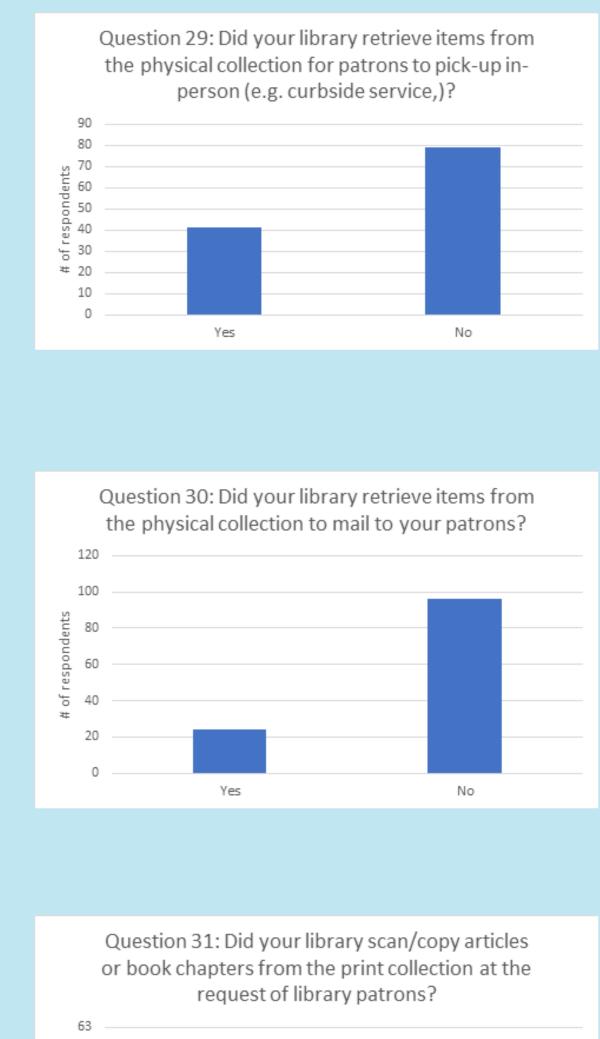
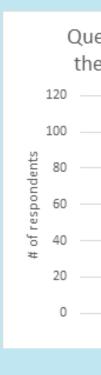Question 26: Indicate all item types filled for interlibrary loan (lending)

- 38 fulfilled requests using both the electronic and physical collections
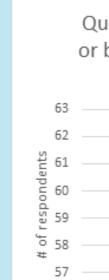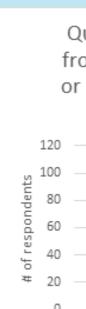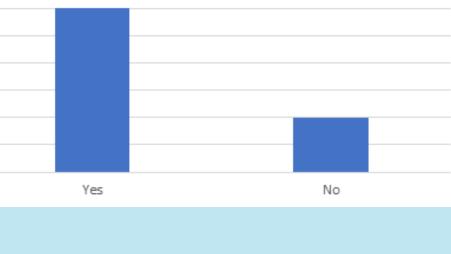- 35 respondents filled requests using only the electronic collection

Question 27: Did your library add new items to the physical reserves collection?

Question 28: Did your library add new items to electronic reserves?

Provision of library materials

Question 29: Did your library retrieve items from the physical collection for patrons to pick-up in-person (e.g. curbside service.)?

Question 30: Did your library retrieve items from the physical collection to mail to your patrons?

Question 31: Did your library scan/copy articles or book chapters from the print collection at the request of library patrons?
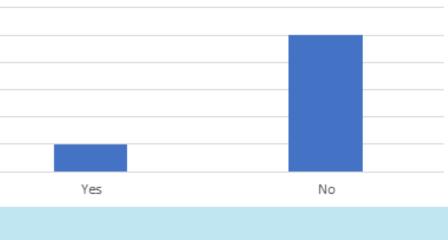
Question 32: Did your library digitize (DVDs/CDs) from the physical collection on behalf of patrons or provide these items to another department to do so?