# Needs Assessment

## Spring 2023

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# Special Collections Overview

The Special Collections at Manatee University is proud to serve faculty and students in their various research endeavors, while also preserving the history of the university and our local community. Established in 1964 in a single room in the Central References Services Library, the Special Collections now has its own separate department located in the west wing of the building and is focused on several different collecting areas such as the university archives, women's history, and local genealogy.

The Special Collections provides the university and the local community with services such as archival and preservation services, reference services, and access to both physical and digital records. Visitors are welcome with or without an appointment, and the Special Collections is typically open Monday through Friday, from 9 AM to 5 PM, and on Saturdays from 9 AM to 3 PM.

## Purpose of Needs Assessment

In an effort to better serve our userbase and understand their needs and their usage behaviors, the Special Collections team has carried out a Needs Assessment comprised of faculty and student interviews and surveys, as well as an analysis of circulation data. This assessment was conducted this past semester and included both in-person and online activities.

Using the results from this assessment, our team aims to reassess the current Special Collections policies and guidelines and determine a long-range plan that will best meet our userbase's needs. Changes in student and staff demographics can greatly affect what sorts of information and resources our userbase is seeking, and we hope to capture a firm understanding of how our users are currently navigating the Special Collection's resources and what areas they feel we should improve upon.

# Methodology Overview

User input data was collected via a combination of interviews and surveys. Interviewees included both graduate students as well as teaching faculty, and responses from three of the interviews are recorded in this report. These interviews were conducted in order to obtain more thorough, individualized responses that we could not otherwise obtain from using only surveys with predetermined responses. Interviewees were asked to expound upon how they utilize Special Collections services and materials in their work and study, as well as in what specific areas our team can improve upon in order to better support our userbase.

Two sets of surveys were prepared and disseminated online: one set targeting staff members, and the other targeting students. The surveys were created using Google Survey. Both surveys contain around 14 questions, and they were designed to obtain data on the following items:

- What types of materials are students and staff members primarily accessing and for what purpose?
- How satisfied are students and faculty members with our current services?
- What types of materials do students and staff members wish to have added to Special Collections?

Advertising for the surveys was done both physically at the campus, with posters and signage hung around school that included QR codes that students and staff could scan to access the surveys, as well as online via the school's various social media accounts and inter-school news alert system. Additionally, links to the surveys were emailed to all students and staff members in an initial email blast at the start of the semester.

Demographic data was pulled from general student and staff demographic figures that are available from the college's official website.

# Demographics Overview

Manatee University has an overall student body of 50,000. With about 30,000 undergraduate students making up that number, leaving graduate students, certificate seekers and other types of students making up the remainder.

Our respondents have been narrowed down to the following categories.

- Professors, instructors
- Graduate students with subcategories of Humanities, Social Science, and Sciences
- Undergraduate students
- Researchers

Undergraduate students seemed to represent the most people that responded to the survey with 1,424 responses. The number is respectable because not everyone will respond to surveys for varied reasons, time constraints, lack of interest, cost benefit to them is unperceived.

Next, we had 644 graduate students survey respondents. Again, respectable for the reasons cited above and that students at this level will have a better grasp of how to conduct research outside of just the university's library system. Of the 644 we found that 375 were graduate students in the sciences: engineering, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology. 168 were graduate students in social sciences: sociology, economics, psychology etc. Finally, 101 respondents were graduate students in the humanities, in areas such as history, philosophy and English literature.

Professors / Instructors were the next group with 413 respondents. In an academic system where there are approximately 6,000 professors / instructors, the representation of 413 seems a little low. To speculate on this is difficult since there was nothing within our surveys to identify why staff would or would not use the special collections.

# Interviews

## Interview I

Key Informant Criteria: Dr. Brown is the Public History Program Director and Professor in the Public History Department. She has frequently consulted with the Special Collections and collaborated with our staff on creating workshops for her students. She is aware of the needs of her program and students and has knowledge on how the Special Collections may work with the Program to better fulfill those needs.

**Q1: How do the Special Collections contribute to your mission, vision, or strategic goals for your program?**

Our mission is to prepare students for careers in museums, cultural heritage institutions, libraries, policy centers etc. where they can bring their knowledge, research, and hands-on experiences to their work in historical projects. The Special Collections can help with all of these, but especially in providing research and hands-on experiences. One of our strategic goals is to develop a grant proposal with your staff so that we can fund more opportunities for our students to do research with your Special Collections.

**Q2: How can the Special Collections better support faculty, especially in terms of its resources?**

In terms of resources, what you have is great, but I would like to see you develop further in terms of local history. You already have a foundation, but I would like to see more collecting focus on more of the marginalized communities that have not traditionally been the focus of special collections and archives. Some of our faculty are focused on these areas, for example, one is researching the effects of gentrification on the underserved communities in our city. I also see much potential for community outreach, one of the Public History program's values.

**Q3: How can the Special Collections better support students, especially in terms of its resources?**

Our students come from different educational backgrounds, and many would like to bring their interests and background to their work in public history. You have such great collections, and it would be great to see more interdisciplinary connections between them. For example, your environment science collection includes documentation of work done on the coastal areas here, which can be connected to local history.

**Q4: What are your suggestions for improving the Special Collections?**

I probably have said this already, but in terms of Public History, I definitely want to see collections focused on local history and community. This is what would make us stand out in our collections. I also believe that community outreach is going to be helpful in your collecting. If your staff would like to meet with me to discuss program planning and fundraising, please get in touch! I think we can do a lot.

# Interview 2 – Two Graduate Students

Key Informant Criteria: Both graduate students are researching their respective topics for their doctoral dissertations. Graduate Student I is in the Anthropology program and Graduate Student II is in the Public History program.

**Q1: How do you use the Collections for research? Which collections are helpful?**

Graduate Student 1: My area of research is in state public health policies over time and its effect on the people living in the Brookdale neighborhood, an economically disadvantaged community for over half a century. Your collection has some useful documents, such as local newsletters that have been helpful for me.

Graduate Student 2: I am investigating the university archives to find how the university, since its inception, have worked with the local government as well as communities living in and around it. I am working my way through the university archives as well as anything pertaining to the local history.

**Q2: How can we improve the Collections?**

Graduate Student 1: I would love to see more personal narratives. I've noticed that other universities are starting to record oral histories, and that would be awesome to include. The video (and I think audio has a place as well) is a great way of recording history. Also, we don't have much time left to capture these narratives. This needs to happen soon if at all! I have some contacts within the community, and if possible, I wouldn't mind helping out with creating some connections to make this happen.

Graduate Student 2: Honestly, the more you can collect, the better. I understand that there are restrictions like money/funds and rights and all of that, but I really think that local history is important and needs to be recorded. Also, if they can be digitized, so much the better. It's easier to access content that way.

# Surveys

## Faculty Survey

To gain a better understanding of staff and faculty needs, a survey was created to gather information on how the university archives can improve its collection. The surveys were circulated digitally by sending out an email to all university faculty as well as posted around campus, on the school's various social media accounts and inter-school news alert system.

1. Have you used university archives and special collections materials? _____Yes _____No
2. What classification of special collection materials did you use? Select all that apply.

    _____University History and Archives

    _____Florida Studies Collections

    _____Florida Environment and Natural History Collections

    _____Children's and Young Adult Literature Collections

    _____LBGTQ+ Collections

    _____African American Experience Collections

    _____Science Fiction & Fantasy Collections

    _____War & Society

    _____Political Papers

    _____Book Collections

    _____Other

3. What is your intended purpose for using the archives?

    _____Research for publication

    _____Research for personal interest

    _____Research for developing coursework

    _____Other

4. How often do you visit the university archives in-person?

_____ At least once a week      _____ Once a month      _____ Once every three months

_____ Once every six months    _____ Once a year        _____ Never

5. How often do you use the university archives digitally?

_____ At least once a week      _____ Once a month      _____ Once every three months

_____ Once every six months    _____ Once a year        _____ Never

6. Do you require your students to utilize university archives for any coursework?

_____Yes _____No  If yes, which courses? _____

7. What are important attributes about the materials for you?

_____

8. Were you able to find the materials you were looking for when you last used the archives? _____Yes _____No _____Partly

9. How would you rate the university archives overall collection?

_____Very Unsatisfactory

_____Unsatisfactory

_____Satisfactory

_____Very Satisfactory

10.       How would you rate the accessibility of university archive in-person?

_____Very Unsatisfactory

_____Unsatisfactory

_____Satisfactory

_____Very Satisfactory

11.     How would you rate the accessibility of university archives digitally?

_____Very Unsatisfactory

_____Unsatisfactory

_____Satisfactory

_____Very Satisfactory

12.     Which classification would you like to see more materials added to?

_____University History and Archives

_____Florida Studies Collections

_____Florida Environment and Natural History Collections

_____Children's and Young Adult Literature Collections

_____LBGTQ+ Collections

_____African American Experience Collections

_____Science Fiction & Fantasy Collections

_____War & Society

_____Political Papers

_____Book Collections

_____Other

13.     Are there any other special collections that you would be interested in the university archives acquiring? _____Yes _____No   If yes, what subjects? _____

_____

14.     If you did not use special collection materials, was it because you:

-     -_____Could not access them

_____Did not need them

_____Had not considered them

_____Other

# Faculty Survey Results

1. **Have you used university archives and special collections materials?**
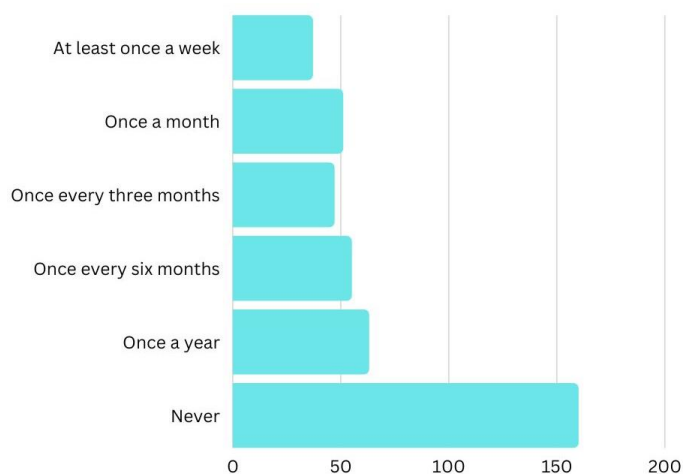


No
15.7%

Yes
84.3%
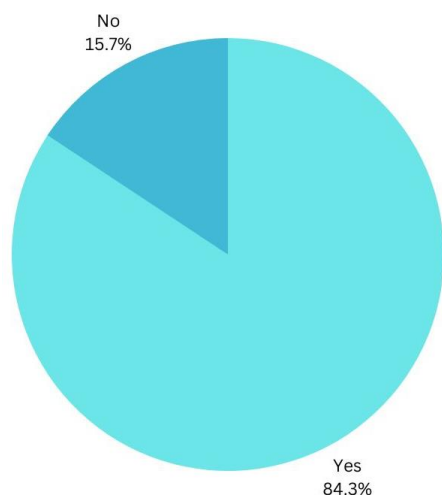
2. **What classification of special collection materials did you use? Select all that apply.**



3. **What is your intended purpose for using the archives?**



Other
8.5%

Research for publication
39%

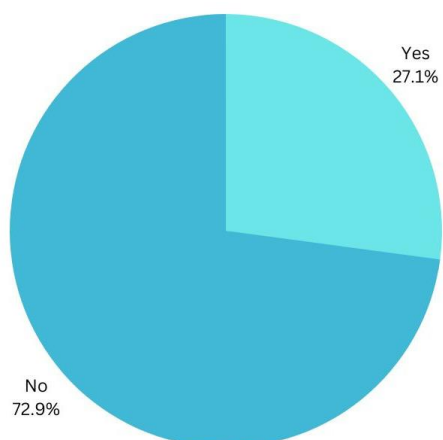Research for developing coursework
32%

Research for personal interest
20.6%
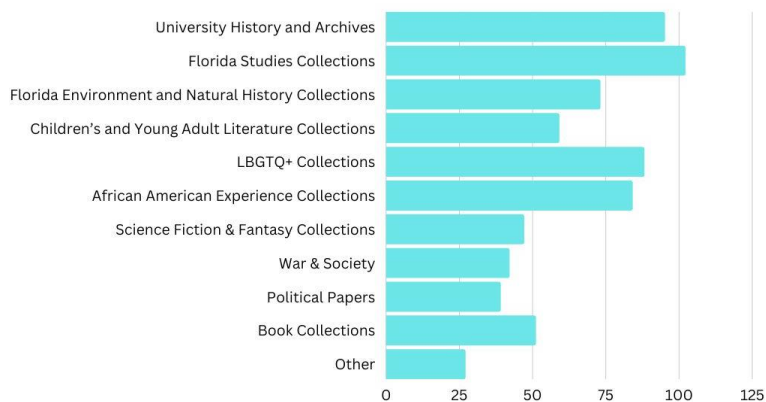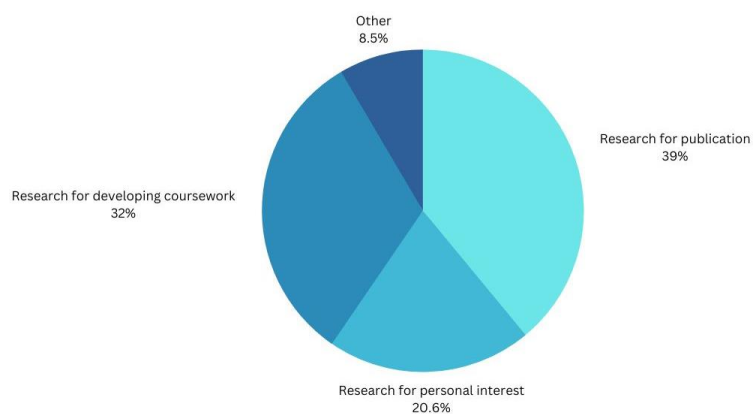
**4. How often do you visit the university archives in-person?**
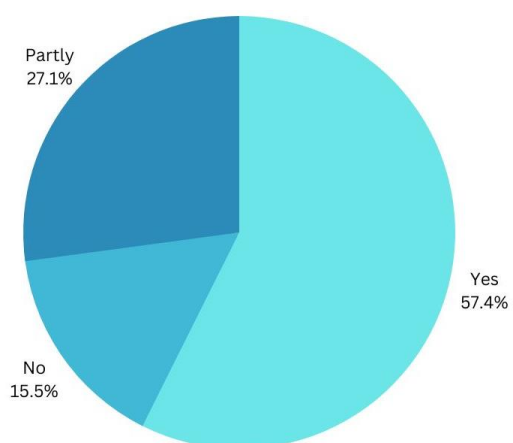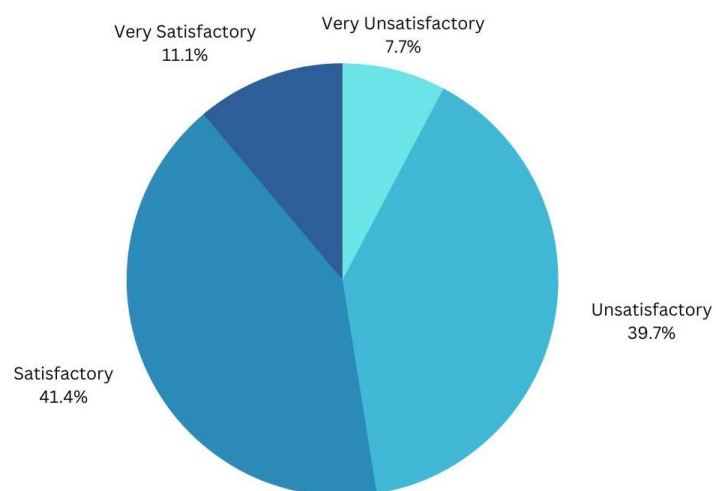


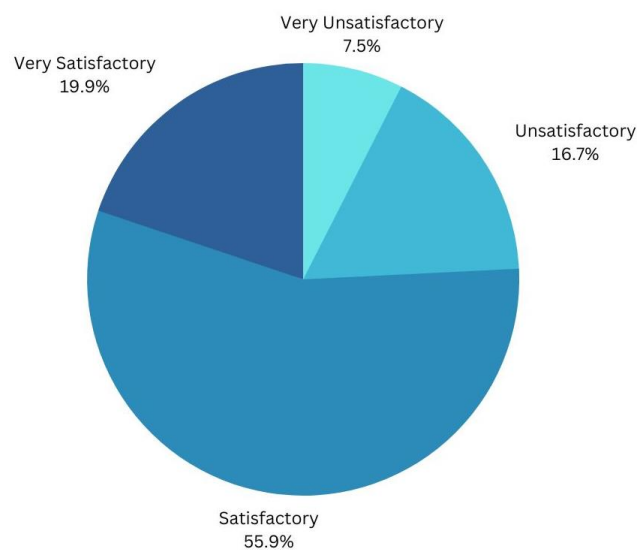**5. How often do you use the university archives digitally?**
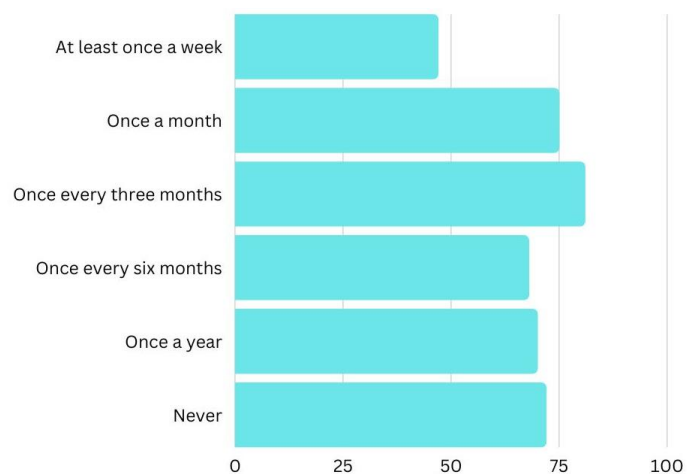


**6. Do you require your students to utilize university archives for any coursework? If yes, which courses?**
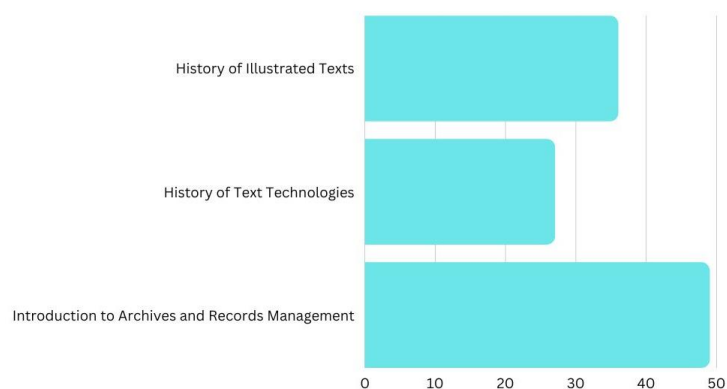
**7.  What are important attributes about the materials for you?**
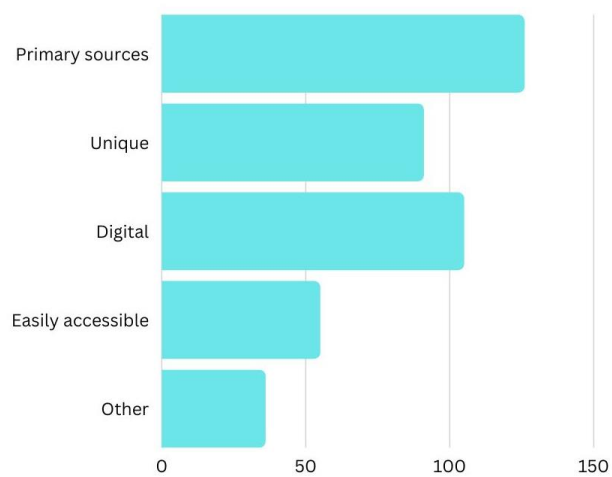


**8.  Were you able to find the materials you were looking for when you last used the archives?**

**9.  How would you rate the university archives overall collection?**
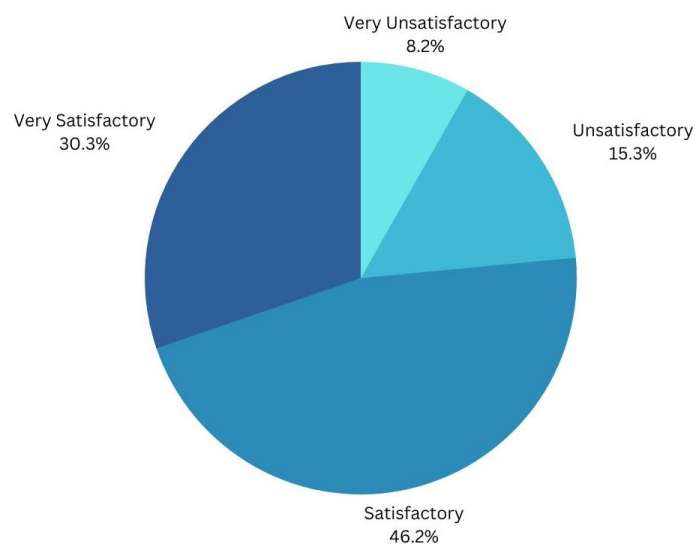


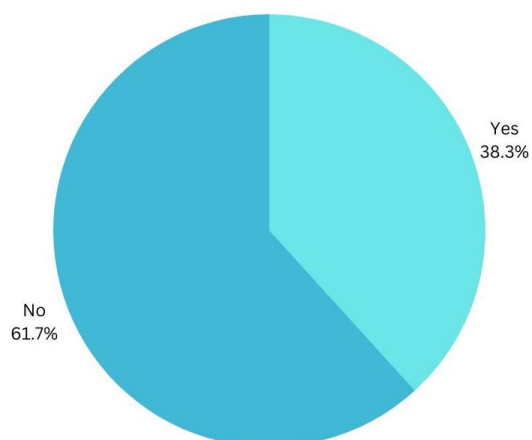**10. How would you rate the accessibility of university archive in-person?**

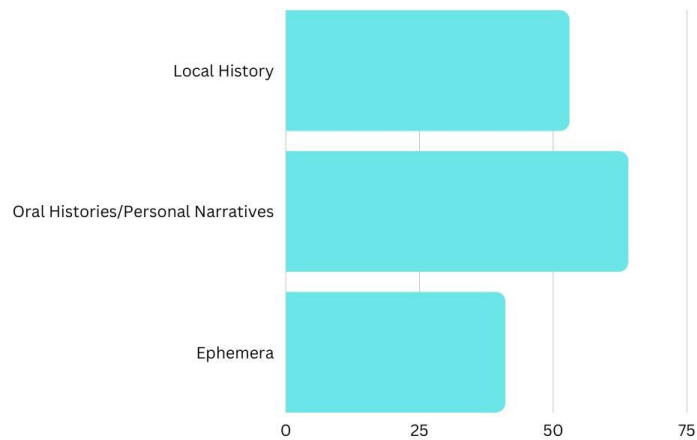**11. How would you rate the accessibility of university archives digitally?**



Very Unsatisfactory
7.5%

Very Satisfactory
19.9%

Unsatisfactory
16.7%

Satisfactory
55.9%

**12. Which classification would you like to see more materials added to?**



| | |
|---|---|
| University History and Archives | |
| Florida Studies Collections | |
| Florida Environment and Natural History Collections | |
| Children's and Young Adult Literature Collections | |
| LBGTQ+ Collections | |
| African American Experience Collections | |
| Science Fiction & Fantasy Collections | |
| War & Society | |
| Political Papers | |
| Book Collections | |
| Other | |

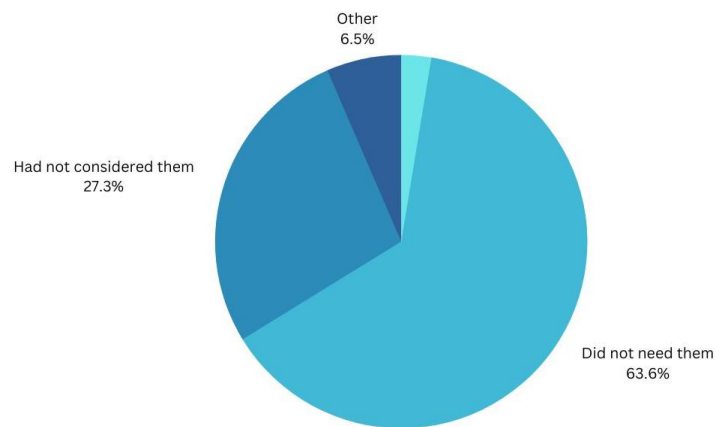**13. Are there any other special collections that you would be interested in the university archives acquiring? If yes, what subjects?**



Yes
38.3%

No
61.7%

Local History

Oral Histories/Personal Narratives

Ephemera

0   25   50   75

**14. If you did not use special collection materials, was it because you:**



Other
6.5%

Had not considered them
27.3%

Did not need them
63.6%

# Student Survey

To gain a better understanding of student needs, a survey was created to gather information on how the university archives can improve its collection. The surveys were circulated digitally by sending out an email to all university students as well as posted around campus, on the school's various social media accounts and inter-school news alert system.

1. Have you used university archives and special collections materials? _____Yes _____No
2. When using special collections, what is your usual role?

   _____Graduate/Post Graduate student

   _____Undergraduate student

3. What classification of special collection materials did you use? Select all that apply.

_____University History and Archives

_____Florida Studies Collections

_____Florida Environment and Natural History Collections

_____Children's and Young Adult Literature Collections

_____LBGTQ+ Collections

_____African American Experience Collections

_____Science Fiction & Fantasy Collections

_____War & Society

_____Political Papers

_____Book Collections

_____Other

4. What is your intended purpose for using the archives?

_____Research for coursework that required the use of university archives

_____Research for coursework that did not require the use of university archives

_____Research for personal interest

_____Research for thesis or publication

_____Other

5. How often do you visit the university archives in-person?

_____ At least once a week    _____ Once a month    _____ Once every three months

_____ Once every six months   _____ Once a year     _____ Never

6. How often do you use the university archives digitally?

_____ At least once a week    _____ Once a month    _____ Once every three months

_____ Once every six months   _____ Once a year      _____ Never

7. Did any of your coursework require you to utilize university archives?

_____Yes _____No  If yes, which courses? _____

8. What are important attributes about the materials for you?

_____

9. Were you able to find the materials you were looking for when you last used the archives? _____Yes _____No _____Partly

10. How would you rate the university archives overall collection?

_____Very Unsatisfactory

_____Unsatisfactory

_____Satisfactory

_____Very Satisfactory

11. How would you rate the accessibility of university archive in-person?

_____Very Unsatisfactory

_____Unsatisfactory

_____Satisfactory

_____Very Satisfactory

12. How would you rate the accessibility of university archives digitally?

_____Very Unsatisfactory

_____Unsatisfactory

_____Satisfactory

_____Very Satisfactory

13. Which classification would you like to see more materials added to?

_____University History and Archives

_____Florida Studies Collections

_____Florida Environment and Natural History Collections

_____Children's and Young Adult Literature Collections

\_\_\_\_\_LBGTQ+ Collections

\_\_\_\_\_African American Experience Collections

\_\_\_\_\_Science Fiction & Fantasy Collections

\_\_\_\_\_War & Society

\_\_\_\_\_Political Papers

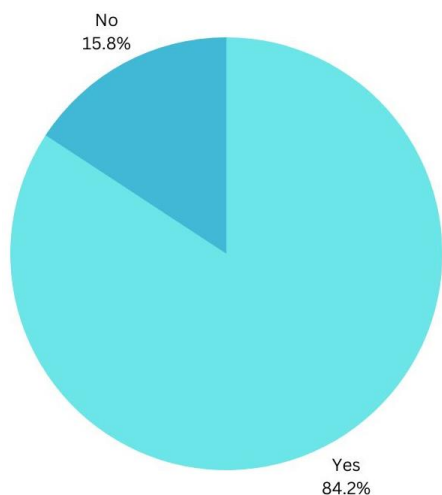\_\_\_\_\_Book Collections

\_\_\_\_\_Other

14. Are there any other special collections that you would be interested in the university archives acquiring? \_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_No    If yes, what subjects? _____

_____

15. If you did not use special collection materials, was it because you:

\_\_\_\_\_Could not access them

\_\_\_\_\_Did not need them

\_\_\_\_\_Had not considered them

\_\_\_\_\_Other

# Student Survey Results

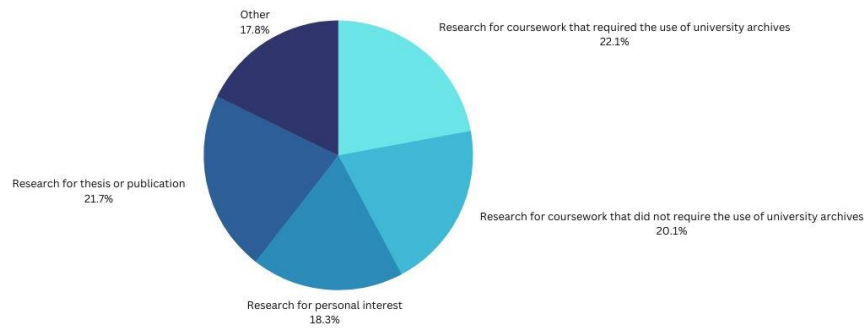1. **Have you used university archives and special collections materials?**

No
15.8%

Yes
84.2%

2. **When using special collections, what is your usual role?**

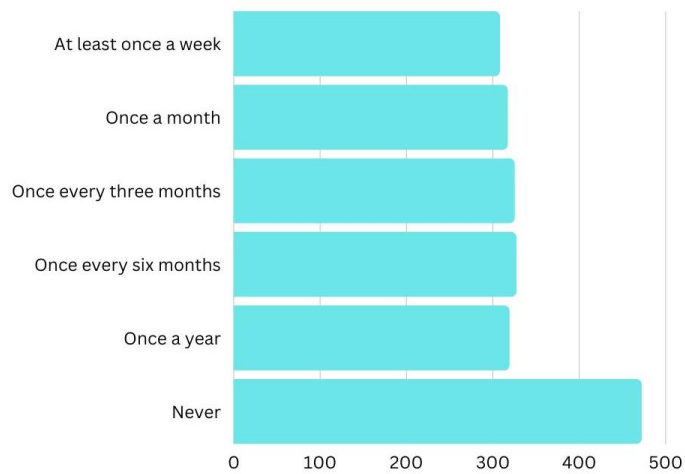Graduate/Post Graduate student
31.1%

Undergraduate student
68.9%
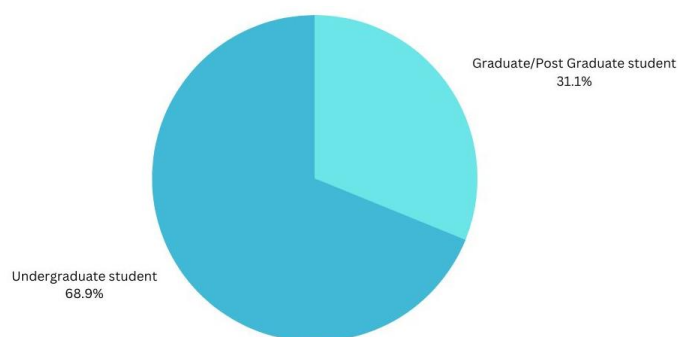
3. **What classification of special collection materials did you use? Select all that apply.**
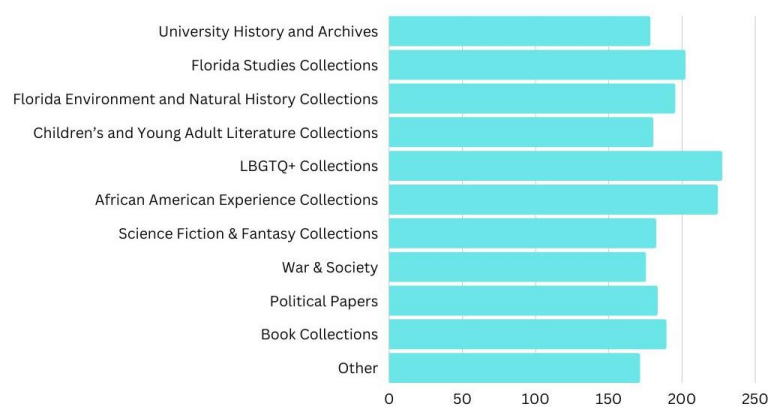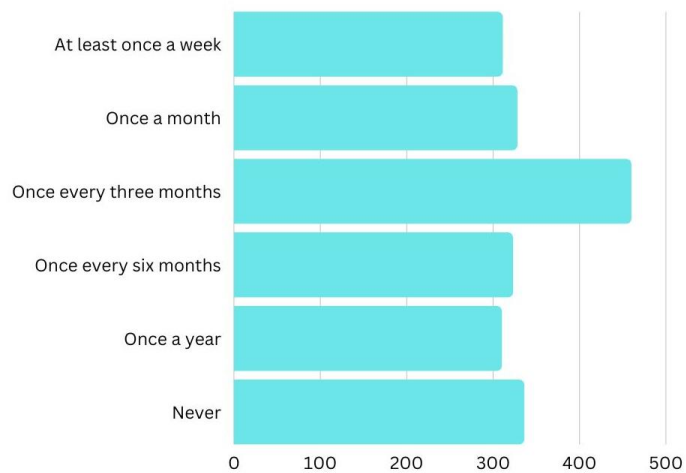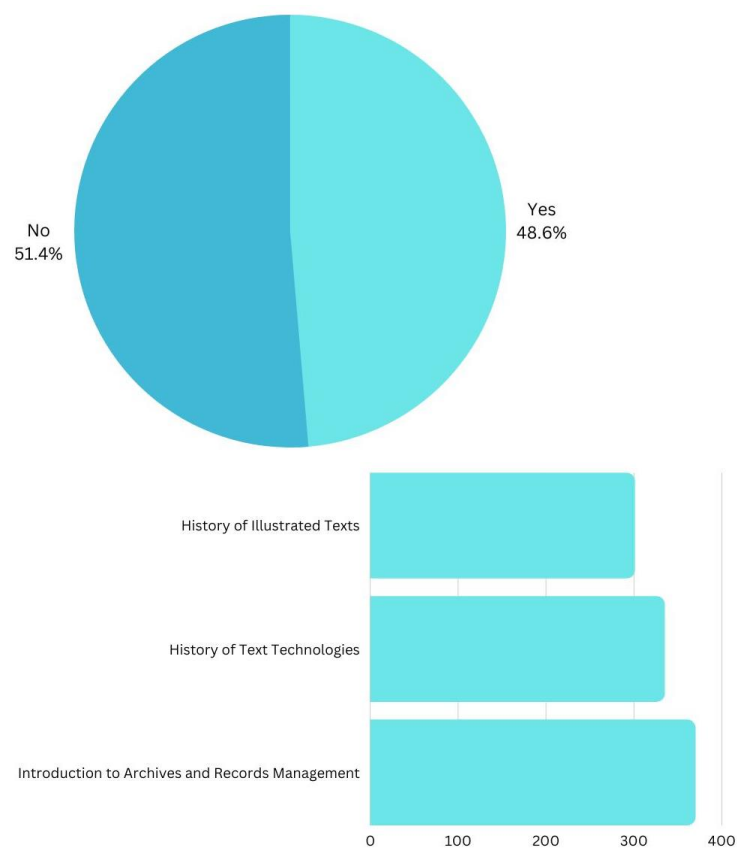
4. **What is your intended purpose for using the archives?**



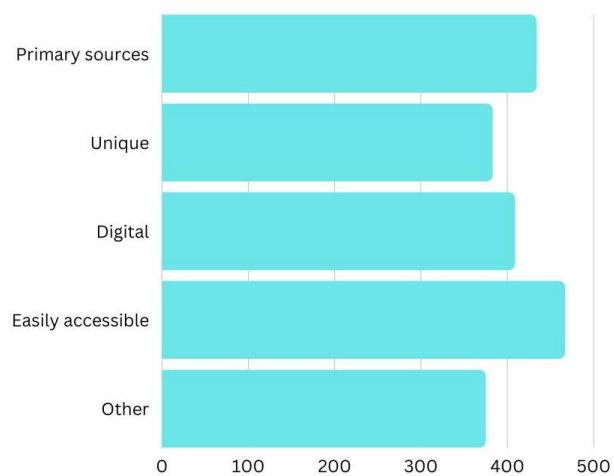5. **How often do you visit the university archives in-person?**



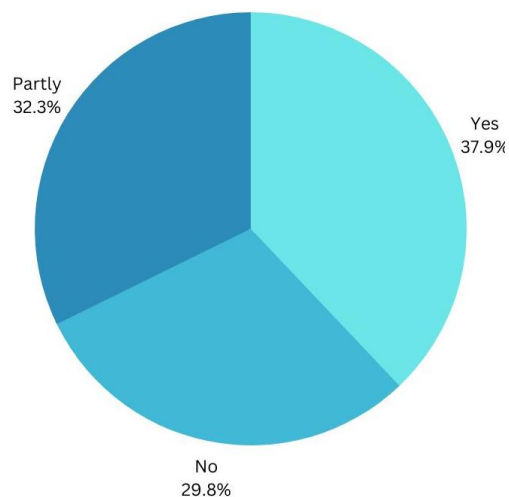6. **How often do you use the university archives digitally?**

7. **Did any of your coursework require you to utilize university archives? If yes, which courses?**
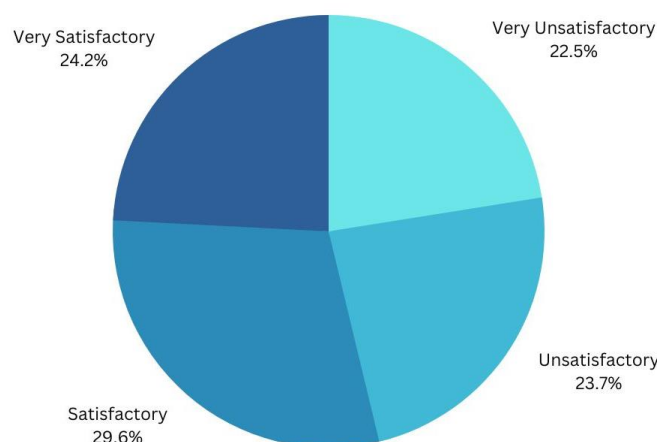


8. **What are important attributes about the materials for you?**

9. **Were you able to find the materials you were looking for when you last used the archives?**

Partly
32.3%

Yes
37.9%

No
29.8%

10. **How would you rate the university archives overall collection?**

Very Satisfactory
24.2%

Very Unsatisfactory
22.5%

Unsatisfactory
23.7%

Satisfactory
29.6%

11. **How would you rate the accessibility of university archive in-person?**

Very Satisfactory
25.1%

Very Unsatisfactory
23.4%

Unsatisfactory
25.8%

Satisfactory
25.7%

12. **How would you rate the accessibility of university archives digitally?**

Very Satisfactory
24.1%

Very Unsatisfactory
22.4%

Unsatisfactory
22.8%

Satisfactory
30.7%

13. **Which classification would you like to see more materials added to?**

| | |
|---|---|
| University History and Archives | |
| Florida Studies Collections | |
| Florida Environment and Natural History Collections | |
| Children's and Young Adult Literature Collections | |
| LBGTQ+ Collections | |
| African American Experience Collections | |
| Science Fiction & Fantasy Collections | |
| War & Society | |
| Political Papers | |
| Book Collections | |
| Other | |

0    100    200    300
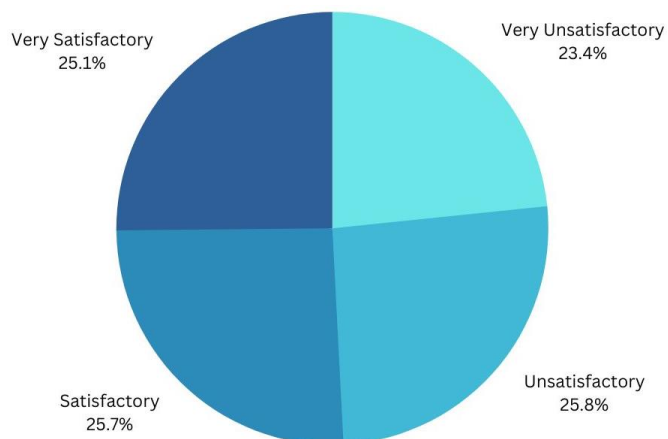
14. Are there any other special collections that you would be interested in the university archives acquiring? If yes, what subjects?
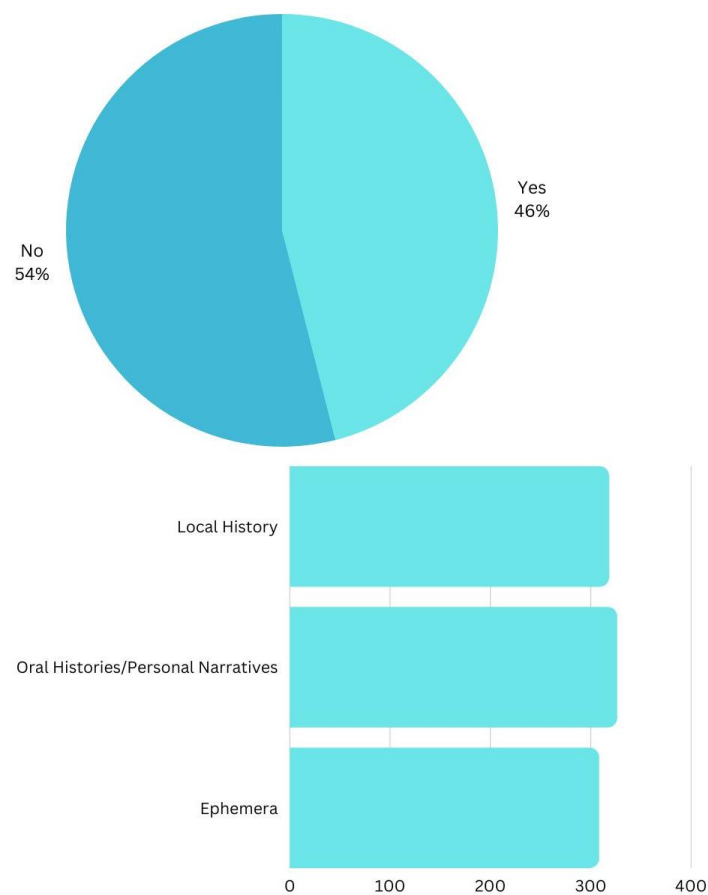




15. **If you did not use special collection materials, was it because you:**

# Results and Analyses

Based on our collection use statistics, we have identified the following trends:

- The LGBTQ+ Collection, the African American Experiences Collection, and the Florida Studies Collection have been the most frequently consulted.

Based on the survey results, we have identified the following trends for special collections resources:

- Digital archives were used more than in-person archives by both faculty and students
- For students, the LGBTQ+ and African American Experiences Collections were utilized the most
- For faculty, the University History and Archives and Florida Studies Collections were utilized the most
- Faculty was concerned with the archival material being primary sources, while students were more concerned about them being easily accessible

Based on the survey results, faculty and staff both recommended the inclusion of the following materials into the University's Special Collections:

- More resources focused on local history
- More accounts of personal narratives and oral histories
- More ephemera resources

Based on the interviews, we have identified the following possible improvements to collection resources:

- More interdisciplinary connections between collecting areas.
- More resources focused on local communities, especially minorities and underserved communities. Methods to obtain resources include developing connections with local communities.
- More audiovisual resources pertaining to local history, such as oral histories.
- More local history resources overall.
- More digitized materials.

# Conclusion

This needs assessment will be presented to our Special Collections Director and the Library Executive Group, along with the Library Communications Team, who may then proceed to work with us, as well as with the University, on fundraising campaigns.

The results above will be used to revise our current collection development policy, including the addition of new sections for digital collections and interdisciplinary collections.

# [1]References

University of South Florida Libraries. (n.d.). *Special Collections.* https://lib.usf.edu/special-collections/

University of South Florida. (n.d.). *About USF*. https://www.usf.edu/about-usf/

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[1] Dummy data was used for this project, but we used the following references to obtain information regarding university demographics and collections.