



## GIOPS Survey for Librarians Working in Government Information

**Government Information and Official Publications Section (GIOPS)  
International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)**

### **Executive Summary**

The Government Information and Official Publications (GIOPS) section of IFLA is pleased to present the results from the 2020 survey entitled “GIOPS Survey for Librarians Working in Government Information”. The goal of this survey is to better understand the government information librarianship landscape in countries represented by the IFLA membership, and to solicit feedback and recommendations for future GIOPS activities. Results from this survey will be used to develop programming and services for the GIOPS membership.

The survey collected responses from 10 July – 7 August 2020. Sixty-three librarians responded to the survey using the SurveyGizmo tool. Respondents were recruited through IFLA and other professional, international librarian listservs. The survey was also presented to the Social Science, National Libraries, and Library and Research Services for Parliamentary Libraries sections of IFLA. Contributors to the survey included: Cornelia Butz, Kris Kasianovitz, Duncan Wambogo Omole, Kathryn Tallman, and Jungwon Yang. Survey results were compiled and analyzed by Jungwon Yang.



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## Demographic Information

### Regional distribution

- 49.8 percent of respondents are from Europe. The second-largest regional group is from North America (27 percent). The third-largest region is Asia (15.8 percent)
- There were three responses from Africa and one response from Latin America and the Caribbean regions.
- For more detailed information about regional distribution, please see [Table 1](#).

### Type of library

- Forty-six percent of participants work in an academic/ university library and 15.9 work in an IGO (Intergovernmental Organization) library.
- 9.5 percent of participants work in a Research Library. For more detailed information, please see [Table 2](#).

### Size of library

- 63.5 percent of respondents work in relatively small organizations (1-50 full-time staff). 23.8 percent work in middle sized organizations (51-299 full-time staff) and 12.7 percent are from relatively large organizations (more than 300 full-time employees)

### Primary role of respondents

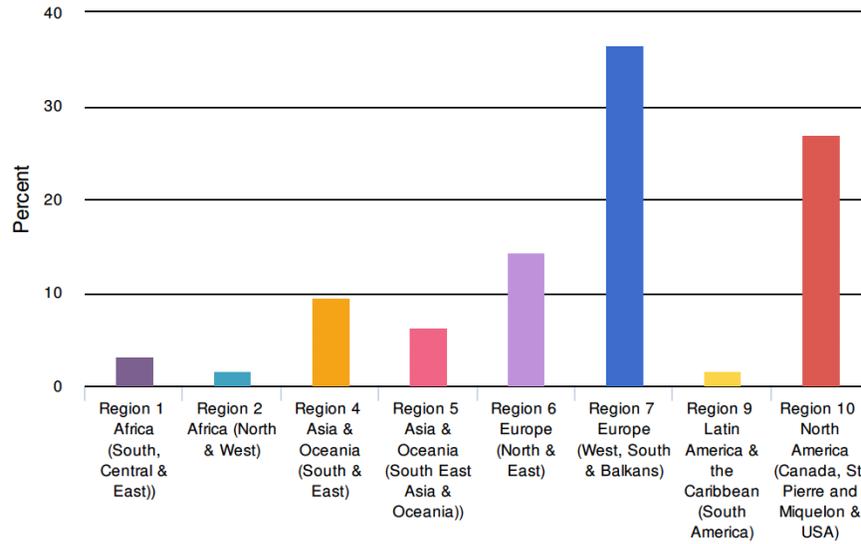
- 44.4 percent of respondents self-identified as director, head, or manager of an institution
- 17.5 percent are government information librarians or government librarians directly involved in government documents collection management and/or services.
- 17.5 percent of respondents self-identified as research librarians, 12.7 percent as reference librarians, and 12.7 percent as subject-specialists (economics, global studies, political science, public policy, law, international government information, and social science). For more details please see [Table 3](#).

### Memberships

- 29.1 percent of respondents are currently GIOPS members. 7.3 percent are previous GIOPS members and 63.6 percent indicated that they never been a GIOPS member.



Table 1. Regional distribution of respondents



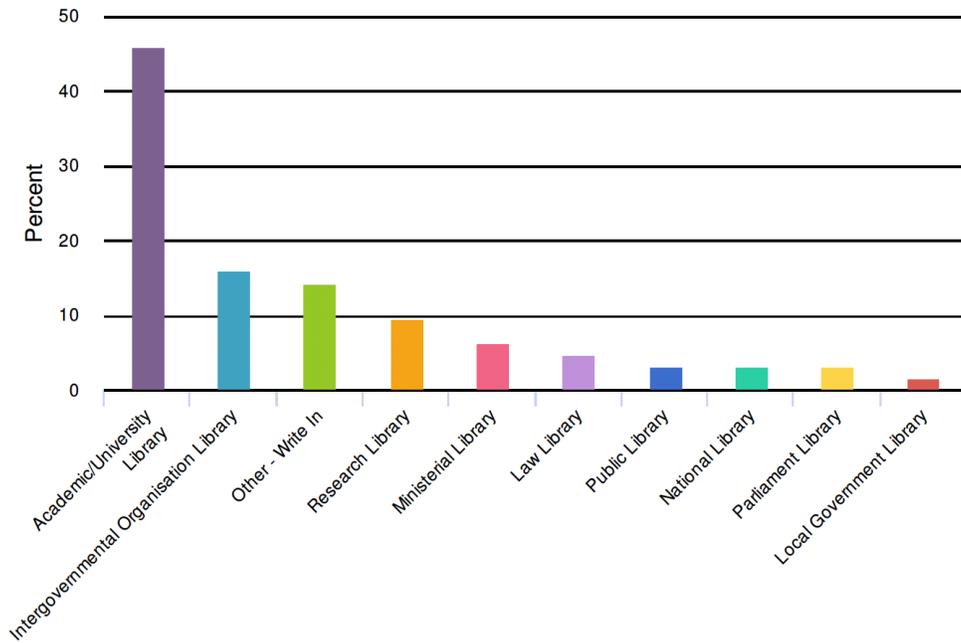
Value	Percent	Responses
Region 1 Africa (South, Central & East)	3.2%	2
Region 2 Africa (North & West)	1.6%	1
Region 4 Asia & Oceania (South & East)	9.5%	6
Region 5 Asia & Oceania (South East Asia & Oceania)	6.3%	4
Region 6 Europe (North & East)	14.3%	9
Region 7 Europe (West, South & Balkans)	36.5%	23
Region 9 Latin America & the Caribbean (South America)	1.6%	1
Region 10 North America (Canada, St. Pierre and Miquelon & USA)	27.0%	17

Totals: 63



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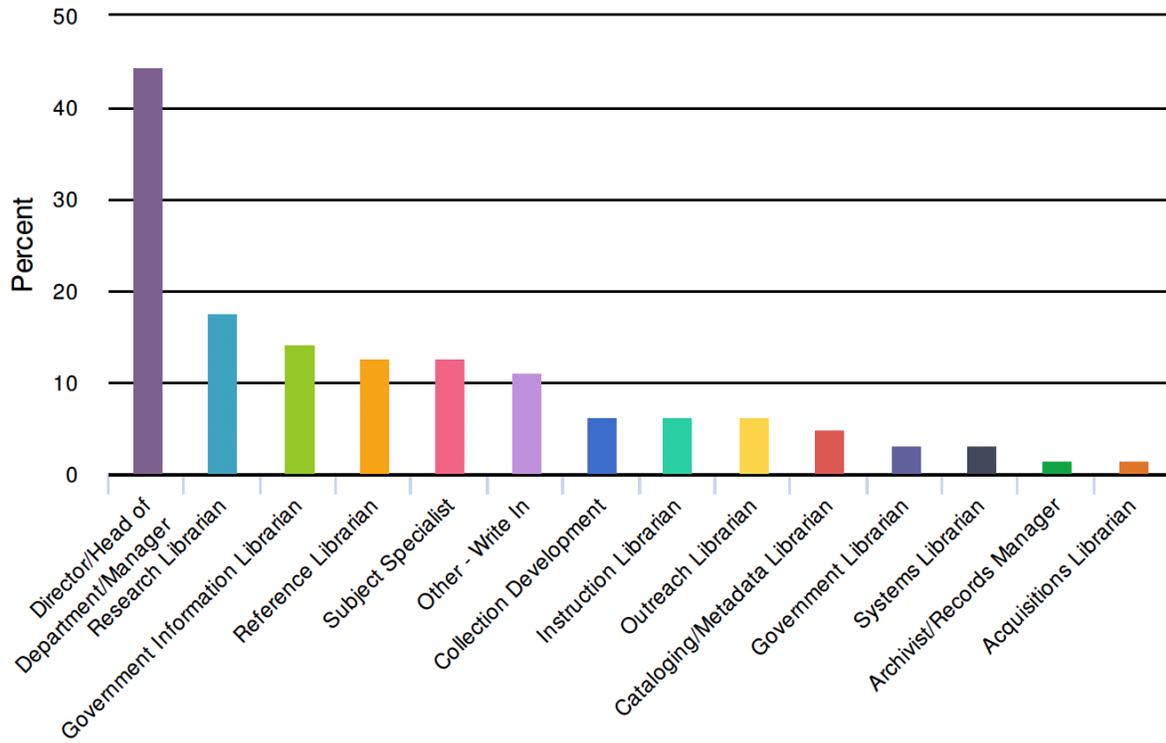
Table 2. Type of Library



Value	Percent	Responses
Academic/University Library	46.0%	29
Intergovernmental Organisation Library	15.9%	10
Other - Write In	14.3%	9
Research Library	9.5%	6
Ministerial Library	6.3%	4
Law Library	4.8%	3
Public Library	3.2%	2
National Library	3.2%	2
Parliament Library	3.2%	2
Local Government Library	1.6%	1



Table 3. Primary roles of respondents





## Survey Results

### Section 1. Acquisition and Accessibility

#### 1.1 Accessibility

##### Library physical space

- 68.3 percent of participants (n=43) answered that their *library space* is open to the public. 14.3 percent said that their institutions provided restricted access (e.g. access is for research only, by registration, or by appointment) and 12.7 percent said their library space is not open to the public.
- 4.8 percent of people indicated that they are not working at a library.
- Please see [Table 4](#)

##### Library collections

- 69.8 percent of participants stated that their *library collections* are open to the public, 11.1 percent are not open to the public, and 11.1 percent of participants selected the ‘not applicable’ option because they do not work at a library.
- 7.2 percent of the respondents allow restricted access to their collections.

##### Collection accessibility

- Open stacks vs. closed stacks:
  - 74.6 percent of institutions provide open stacks, while 40 percent said that their government information materials are in closed stacks.
  - 32.2 percent have non-lending collections.
  - 72.9 percent provide online collection services.
  - 13.6 percent provide fee-based access services to their patrons.



## 1.2. Materials Acquisitions

- 77.4 percent of institutions currently collect print government collections or other tangible materials (e.g., microform, CD-Rom).
- 57.6 percent of institutions have no dedicated budget for government collections.
- Printed government information collections:
  - 79.2 percent of institutions receive printed materials as gifts from governments or international governmental organizations (IGOs).
  - 33.3 percent of institutions acquire print collections as paid subscriptions or firm orders directly from governments or IGOs.
  - 22.9 percent of institutions purchase collections from vendors.
  - A small number of respondents also mentioned that they acquire collections through a depository program. Please see [Table 5](#).

### Regional Characteristics

- 97.7 percent of responding institutions in Europe acquire some of their print collection as gifts from Governments or IGO's. This is compared to 26.1 percent in North America.
- 26.1 percent of European subscription collections come from Governments or IGO's and 13 percent are purchased through a vendor.
- 38.5 percent of North American subscription collections come from governments or IGO's and 46.2 percent are purchased through a vendor.
- North American institutions are more likely to purchase subscriptions from government agencies, IGO's, and vendors than European institutions.

### Depository Programs

- 51.6 percent of responding institutions receive government information materials through a depository program.
- Detailed information on depository program participation is available in [Table 6](#).

### Born Digital Collections

- 67.7 percent of respondents said that their institutions are collecting born-digital materials.
- The most popular strategy for collecting born-digital documents is to download them to an institutional repository (64.3 percent). The second most



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popular strategy is to add collection information to the library catalog. And the third popular option is to subscribe to an online library (45.2 percent). 33.3 percent of libraries are doing web-archiving to preserve the born-digital materials.

### Digitization

- 41.4 percent of institutions are digitizing government publications
- The primary reason for digitization are preservation and improving access.
- Among the institutions that digitize the government publications, 87.5 percent have in-house-facilities for the digitization. Fifty percent of respondents said that they outsource the digitization process.

Table 4. Accessibility of Physical Space

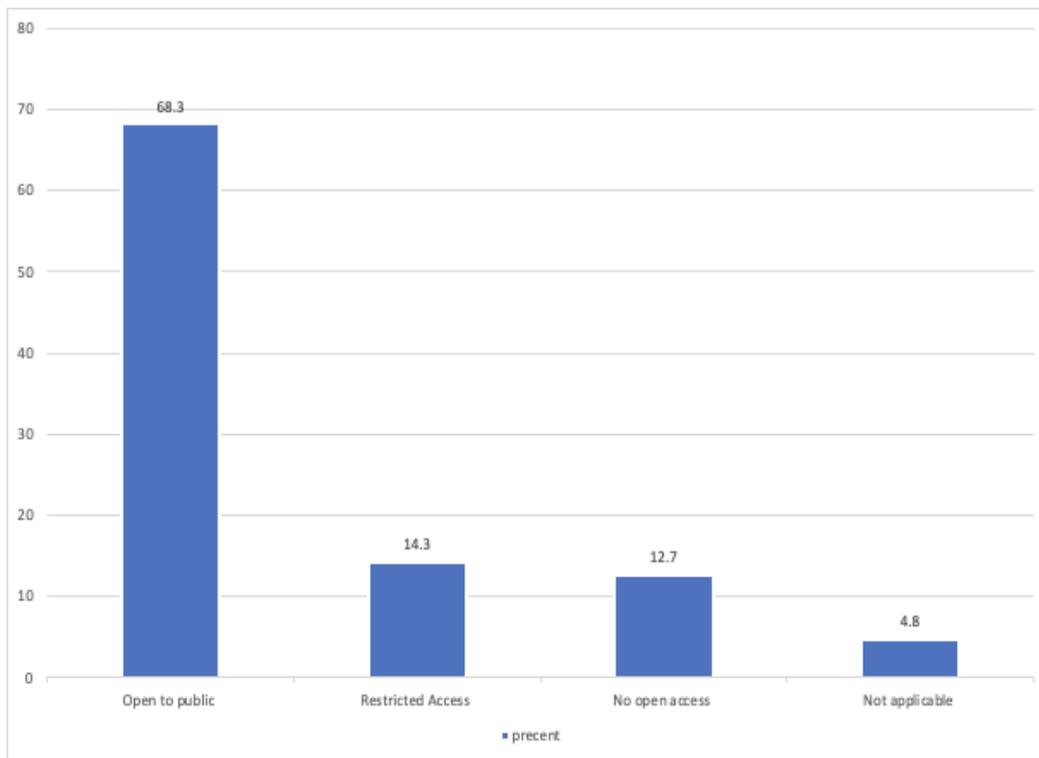
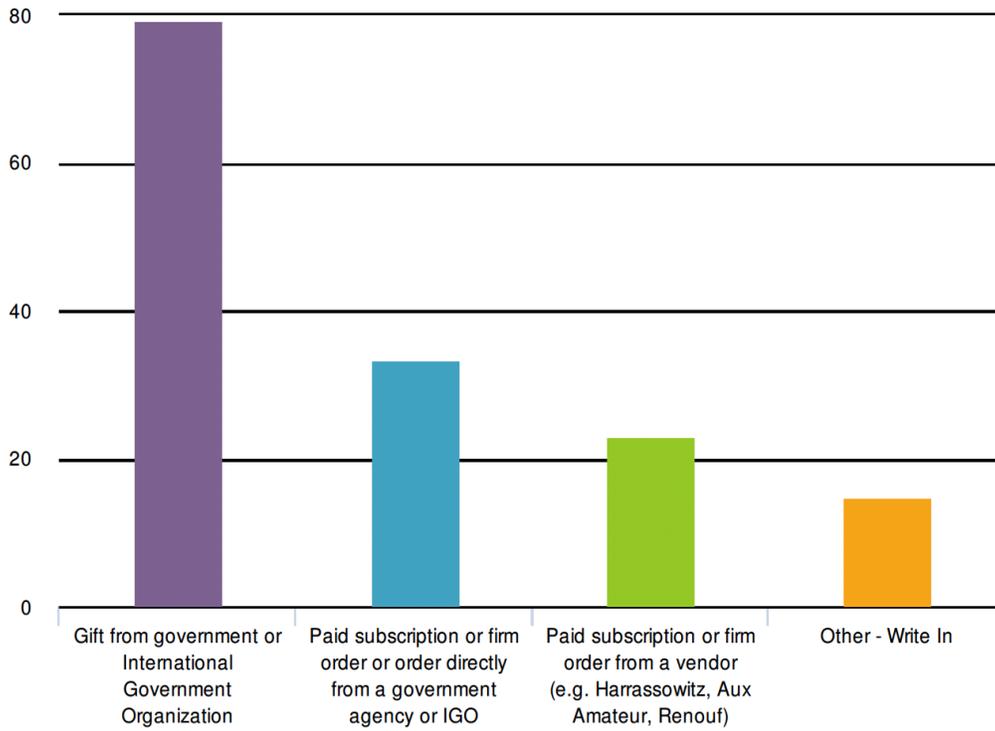




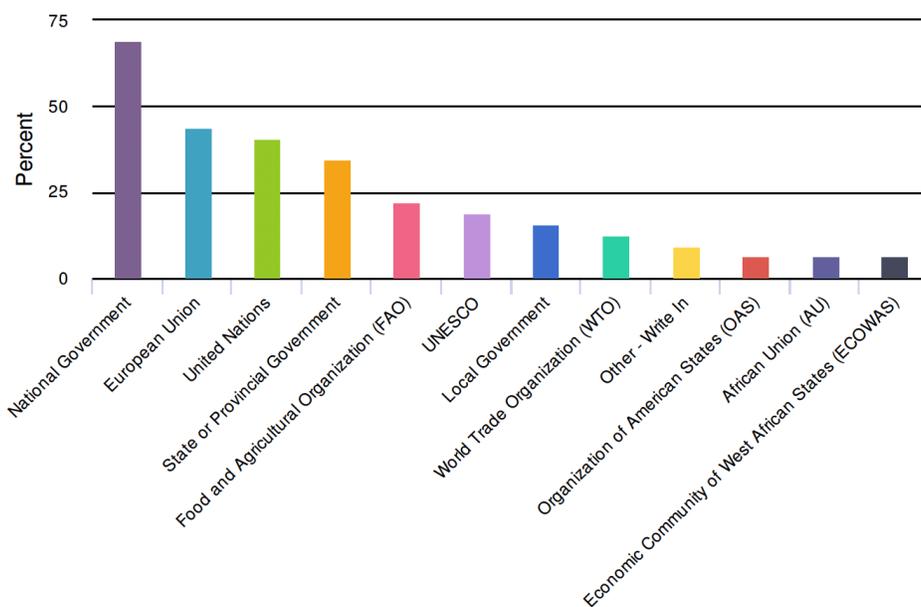
Table 5. Printed Government Information Collection Acquisition





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Table 6. Depository programs<sup>1</sup>



Value	Percent	Responses
National Government	68.8%	22
European Union	43.8%	14
United Nations	40.6%	13
State or Provincial Government	34.4%	11
Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)	21.9%	7
UNESCO	18.8%	6
Local Government	15.6%	5
World Trade Organization (WTO)	12.5%	4
Other - Write In	9.4%	3
Organization of American States (OAS)	6.3%	2
African Union (AU)	6.3%	2
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	6.3%	2

<sup>1</sup> This question was only available for respondents who indicated that their institutions participate in a depository program. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options for this question.

## Section 2: Trends and Challenges related to Government Information Services

### 2.1. Library users' needs

- The most popular user requests were information from the national government (74.6 percent), IGOs information (72.9 percent), laws and legal materials (64.4 percent), and statistics and data (62.7 percent). It is worth noting that library users also requested maps (40.7 percent) and geospatial data (25.4 percent). Please see [Table 7](#) for more information.

#### Government information training or instruction

- 82.8 percent of respondents indicated that their institutions provide training or instruction sessions to their patrons.
- In-person training sessions are most common in libraries (97.7 percent). Yet, a significant number of respondents (75 percent) also provide online classes. This will likely increase during the COVID-19 crisis.

### 2.2. Usage trends

#### Collections

- 50.9 percent of respondents have seen a decrease in *print* collections over the past five years, while 29.8 percent believe that usage has stayed the same.
- 65.9 percent of respondents said they had seen an increase in *online* collections over the past five years. 25.9 percent believe that usage of online collections has stayed the same.

#### Services

- 43 percent of respondents believe that the need for government information services had stayed the same in the last five years. 31 percent said that the demands for the services have been increasing over time, while 24 percent said that the need has been decreasing over the past. Please check table 8 for more detailed information.



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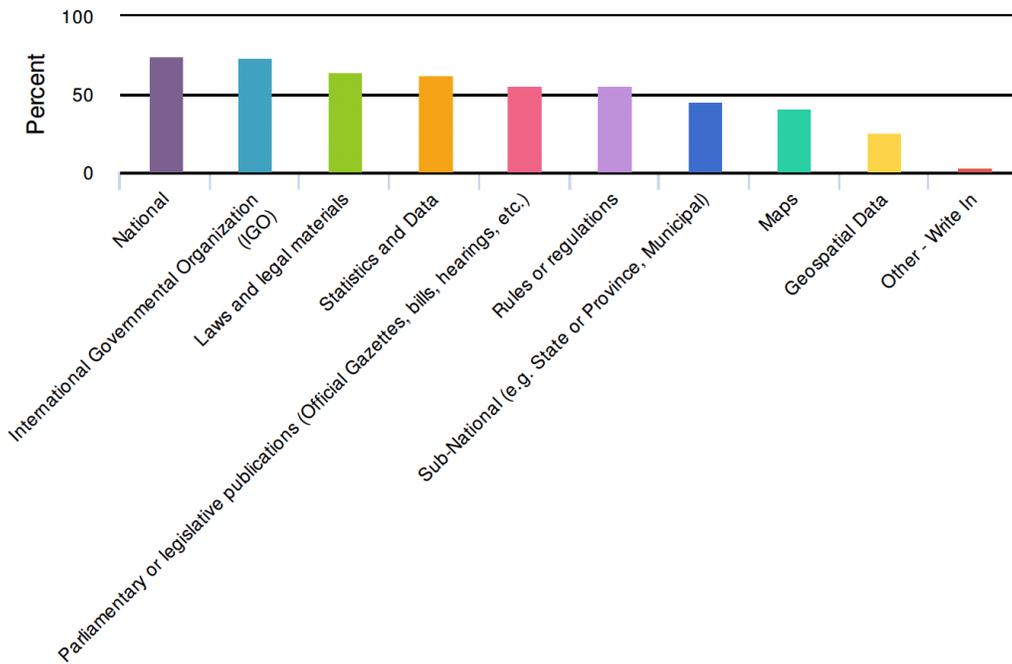
### Types of Requests

- 64 percent of respondents say that their users want libraries to make their print publications available in the digital format, while 55 percent say that their users request data. These results may help us to understand the decrease in usage of the print collection.



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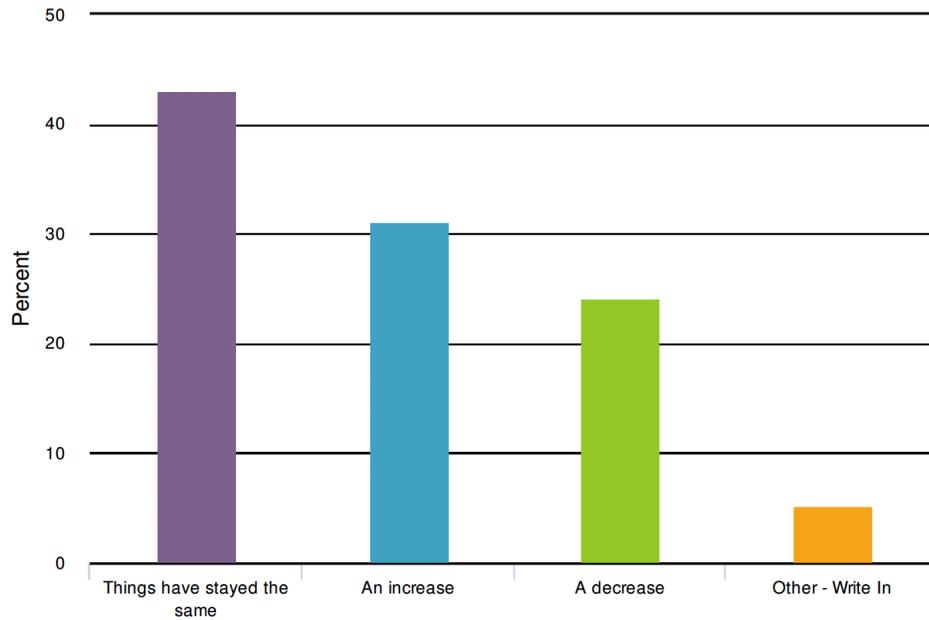
Table 7. Government information usage



Value	Percent	Responses
National	74.6%	44
International Governmental Organization (IGO)	72.9%	43
Laws and legal materials	64.4%	38
Statistics and Data	62.7%	37
Parliamentary or legislative publications (Official Gazettes, bills, hearings, etc.)	55.9%	33
Rules or regulations	55.9%	33
Sub-National (e.g. State or Province, Municipal)	45.8%	27
Maps	40.7%	24
Geospatial Data	25.4%	15
Other - Write In	3.4%	2



Table 8. Usage trend of library services for government information in the last five years<sup>2</sup>



Value		Percent	Responses
Things have stayed the same		43.1%	25
An increase		31.0%	18
A decrease		24.1%	14
Other - Write In		5.2%	3

<sup>2</sup> There were 3 write-in responses and all of them said, “ I don’t know.”

## Section 3. Professional Training and Support

### 3.1. Opportunities for training

- 32.1 percent of respondents (n=18 out of 56) indicated that they had an opportunity to train as government information librarians before starting their job. 62.5 percent did not have specialized training as a government information librarian before entering their job.
- 42.9 percent of people, (n=24 out of 56), said they received training in government information only after becoming librarians.
- Only 32.1 percent of respondents, (n=18 out of 56) showed strong confidence that they have the tools and knowledge necessary to work with and provide support for government information services. Please see [Table 9](#) for more detailed information.

### 3.2. Communication Tools

- In this survey, respondents were about their communication preferences to receive information and support from GIOPS.
- Respondents identified a newsletter as the best channel for GIOPS updates. The next most popular tool was workshops, and the third was GIOPS professional publications.

#### Preferences by membership and region

- GIOPS members are more likely to rank tutorials, newsletters, and webinars as the best communication tools. Non-GIOPS members prefer workshops, newsletters, and professional reports.
- Regionally, respondents in North America and Europe have a strong preference for workshops and newsletters. Asia, Africa, and Latin Americas and Caribbean regions' respondents are more likely to use webinars.
- For more detailed information, please visit [Table 10](#).

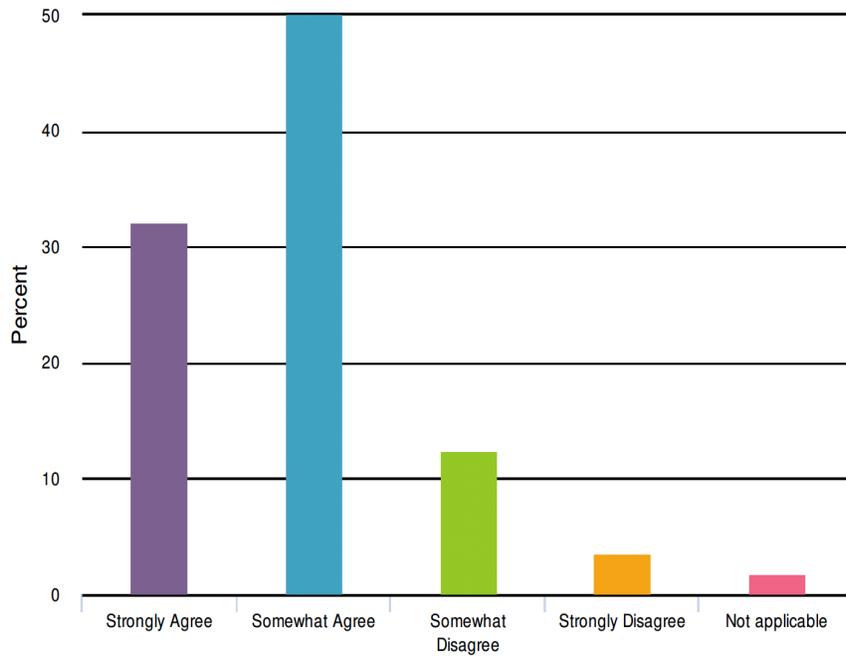


### 3.3. Government Information Educational Topics

- This survey asked respondents to rank their interest in eight topics related to government information. [Table 11](#) presents these results.
- 72.2 percent of the total respondents have a strong interest in government data, including statistics and geospatial data. Born digital collection development comes in second, and the third most popular topic was web archiving of governments and IGOs websites. The fourth most popular topic was copyright issues related to government information.
- GIOPS members, government information librarians, and government librarians preferences identified government data as the most popular topic. Information literacy and mis/disinformation is the second most useful topic. Finally, born-digital collection development and copyright were popular as well.



Table 9. Confidence of knowledge as a government information librarian<sup>3</sup>



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Agree	32.1%	18
Somewhat Agree	50.0%	28
Somewhat Disagree	12.5%	7
Strongly Disagree	3.6%	2
Not applicable	1.8%	1

Totals: 56

<sup>3</sup> The original question asked, “do you feel like you have the tools and knowledge necessary to work with and provide support for government information?”



Table 10. Communication Tools

Rank	Total respondents	GIOPS members	Non-GIOPS members	Government Information and Government Librarians
1	<b>GIOPS newsletter</b>	Tutorials	Workshops	GIOPS professional reports
2	<b>Workshops</b>	GIOPS newsletter	GIOPS newsletter	GIOPS newsletter
3	<b>GIOPS professional reports</b>	Webinars	GIOPS professional reports	Workshops
4	<b>Tutorials (e.g., website, library guide)</b>	Workshops	Webinars	Best practices for government information collection management
5	<b>Webinars</b>	GIOPS professional reports	Best practices for government information collection management	Tutorials
6	<b>Best practices for government information collection management</b>	Best practices for government information collection management	Tutorials	Webinars



Table 11. Educational Topics

Rank (percent)	Total respondents (n=55)	GIOPS members (n=20)	Government information and Government librarians (n=11)
1	<b>Government data</b> (72.2%)	Government data (75.0 %)	Government data (90.9 %)
2	<b>Born digital collection development</b> (63.6 %)	Information literacy & disinformation issues (65.0 %)	Web Archiving (81.8 %)
3	<b>Web Archiving</b> (61.1%)	Web Archiving (63.2 %)	Born digital collection development (72.7 %)
4	<b>Copyrights issues</b> (56.4 %)	Born digital collection development (55.0 %)	Copyrights issues (72.7 %)
5	<b>Information literacy &amp; disinformation issues</b> (56.4 %)	Copyrights issues (52.6 %)	Archiving and Preservation (52.8 %)
6	<b>Archiving and Preservation</b> (52.8 %)	Archiving and Preservation (45.0 %)	Information literacy & disinformation issues (45.5 %)
7	<b>Utilizing social medias</b> (41.5 %)	Utilizing social medias (36.8 %)	Utilizing social medias (45.5 %)
8	<b>Development of collection management standard</b> (39.5 %)	Development of collection management standard (36.8 %)	Development of collection management standard (27.3 %)



## Key Findings

### Printed Collection Acquisition

The majority of libraries still collect printed government publications. The venues of collection, however, differ depending on the region. Institutions in North America are more likely to use paid subscriptions from governments, IGOs, and vendors than institutions in other areas.

### Depository Programs

A significant number of institutions are not involved in a national government or IGO depository program.

### Born-digital collections

The majority of institutions collect born-digital documents and publications. In the United States, approximately 90 percent of government publications are born-digital materials, this is not a surprising result. It is worth noting that libraries in Europe are also more likely to collect born-digital materials.

### Patrons' needs

- 1) Patrons' usage of printed collections has decreased. Online material usage has increased.
- 2) Requests to digitize print materials have increased.
- 3) Government and IGOs statistics, maps, and geospatial data are requested by many library users.
- 4) Most librarians teach government information, yet a significant number of librarians are not confident enough to deliver the information to their clients.

### Communication tools & Educational topics

Respondents identified newsletters, workshops, and professional publications as the top three tools to receive information from GIOPS. Respondents in Asia and Africa prefer to tutorials and webinars. Government data, born-digital collecting, web archiving, and copyright issues are the most interesting topics for respondents.

### Limitations

Most respondents were from Europe and North America.



## Recommendations

- 1) Based on the survey results, GIOPS should begin to distribute a regular newsletter
- 2) GIOPS should sponsor webinars, workshops, or other educational modules related to government data, born-digital collections, web-archiving, disinformation, and copyrights issues. GIOPS should also seek out opportunities to collaborate with other sections within IFLA
- 3) There is a significant need and opportunity for GIOPS to recruit members outside of Europe and North America