

## LIBRARY TOP 10 JOURNALS, A USER SURVEY

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**ABSTRACT:** The Jack K. Williams Library at Texas A&M University at Galveston surveyed its users to see what 10 journals each user considered to be most important for their purposes. From approximately 1250 library users (current faculty, staff, and enrolled students), 90 completed surveys were returned. 347 unique titles were listed by survey respondents. At the time of the survey, the Library had 400 paid subscriptions. Of those 400, only 222 were listed by respondents in their Top 10 listing. 125 titles listed by respondents were not held by the Library. The results of this survey will be discussed in relation to status of respondent (faculty, staff, student), department, title availability in the Library, and interlibrary lending trends.

### INTRODUCTION

The Jack K. Williams Library of Texas A&M University reviews its journal collection with an eye to keeping its budget balanced in the face of inflationary increases in scientific journal subscription costs that are not matched by increases in library funding. A campus-wide Library Committee, made up of faculty and students, advises the Library Director in these reviews. The Graduate Student member of the Library Committee suggested a review that hadn't been done before: an open-ended survey that asked for only the ten most important journals for the needs of each respondent. The Library Committee endorsed this idea and a survey instrument was designed and distributed across campus.

The makeup of the Texas A&M University at Galveston is fairly unique. It has historically enrolled only undergraduate students, but joint faculty appointments with the main campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas (140 miles from Galveston) have supported a growing number of graduate students and research at the campus. Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) is a branch campus of Texas A&M University.

As of Spring Semester 1997 when the survey was run, there were 1030 undergraduate students enrolled. TAMUG is limited in its offerings as a "special purpose" institution serving the educational needs of marine and maritime subject areas. Seven majors are offered: Maritime Administration (the shoreside operations of maritime transportation);

Marine Biology, Marine Fisheries (a specialty area of Marine Biology), Marine Engineering (the mechanical engineering side of marine/maritime operations); Maritime Systems Engineering (civil engineering side of marine/maritime operations, e.g., harbor facilities); Marine Transportation; and Marine Sciences (physical sciences studies in the marine environment). Students who may be interested in a professionally licensed career starting at Third Mate or Third Assistant Engineer are enrolled in the Texas State Maritime Program. They declare a major in one of the above fields but take additional classes to fulfil their licensing requirements. 149 are enrolled in the License Option program.

Table 1 shows the distribution of undergraduate enrollment in Spring 1997. Enrollment in "General Academics" should be interpreted as no declared majors: at the time of the survey, no degrees were offered in that department.

**Table 1. TAMUG Undergraduate Enrollment by Majors**

Maritime Administration (MARA)	137
Marine Biology (MARB)	418
Marine Fisheries (MARF)	23
Marine Engineering (MARE)	29
Maritime Systems Engineering (MASE)	110
Marine Transportation (MART)	90
Marine Sciences (MARS)	140
General Academics (GACD)	83
<b>TOTAL ENROLLMENT:</b>	<b>1030</b>
<i>License Option</i>	<i>149</i>

## **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

The survey instrument follows as Table 2.

The survey is very open-ended and requests a list of the ten journal titles that are most important to the respondent. Responses do not have to be limited to currently received

journal titles, and there is no need to list the most general titles that the Library intends to retain: *Science*, *Scientific American*, *Nature*, *Houston Chronicle* (newspaper), *Galveston County Daily News*, *Wall Street Journal*, or indexing and abstracting tools.

**Table 2. Survey Instrument**

**MEMORANDUM**

To: TAMUG Faculty, Staff, and Students  
From: Natalie Wiest, Library Director  
Date: January 14, 1997  
Subject: Library Journals Survey & Current Journals List

This questionnaire comes to you at the request of the Library Committee as a method of assessing what are the most important journals for Williams Library. The format is quite simple: list the ten journal titles that are most important to you.

Behind the questionnaire is the list of currently received journal titles. You do not have to limit your response to this listing: it is provided as a convenience. You may keep the listing when you return the questionnaire.

You do not need to list the journals "Science", "Scientific American", or "Nature". You can count on the Library maintaining those subscriptions, and also to the Houston Chronicle, Galveston County Daily News, and Wall Street Journal. You also do not need to list currently held indexing or abstracting services (e.g., Biological Abstracts).

The most important journals for you are:

From the desk of:  
Natalie Wiest  
Library Director  
Jack K. Williams Library  
Texas A&M University at Galveston  
P.O. Box 1675  
Galveston TX 77553-1675

I am a faculty/staff/student (please circle) in the department of \_\_\_\_\_  
at TAMUG:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed questionnaire to: Natalie Wiest  
Jack K. Williams Library, TAMUG  
by February 14, 1997.

Thank you!

Surveys were distributed by two methods: one was mailed to every faculty member, and to each graduate student. Undergraduate students did not receive individual mailings, but were encouraged to pick up the surveys in the Student Government office and at the Circulation desk of the Library.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

Table 3 lists overall survey results. 90 completed surveys were returned: 32 from undergraduate students; 24 from graduate students; and 33 from faculty. Note that the percentage of participants increased in that order: 3% for undergraduates; 30% from graduate students; 43% for faculty. The irony of this response rate is that undergraduate students get charged a Library Use Fee based on their semester credit hours, and those funds are the only new and significant increase in funding the Library has received in the past three years. Graduate Students, heavy library users, pay no Library Use Fee, and otherwise do not contribute directly or indirectly to local library funding.

Table 3 SURVEY RESULTS

90 Completed surveys received
32 from Undergraduates (of 1080)
24 from Graduate students (of 80)
33 from Faculty (of 76)
347 unique journal titles listed
222 of the current 403 paid subscriptions currently received
181 titles listed that are not currently received
125 titles listed never received

From Table 3, there were 347 unique journal titles listed on the "Top 10" survey. 222 of those titles were currently received by the Library. 181 titles on the listing are not currently received, and of those 125 were never received. The difference between 181 and 125 is made up of titles the Library may have received at one time but has dropped - either by title change or subscription cancellation.

Overall, the 11 titles (contrary to the title of this paper, there are 11 because in the last place there are three titles with the same number of requests) listed most often are in Table 4, which follows:

**Table 4. TOP 10 JOURNALS FOR WILLIAMS LIBRARY**

<u>Journal Title:</u>	<u>Number of Listings:</u>
Marine Biology	17
Marine Ecology Progress Series	15
Marine Mammal Science	15
Ecology	14
Estuaries	14
Animal Behavior	12
Canadian Journal of Zoology	12
Professional Mariner	9
Biological Bulletin	8
Fishery Bulletin	8
Marine Chemistry	8

Of the eleven titles listed as "Top 10", there are current subscriptions to nine. Marine Ecology Progress Series was dropped from our subscription list in 1989 because of cost; Canadian Journal of Zoology had never been subscribed too, but will be added in 1998.

Because of the uneven distribution of respondents by department, we listed the most important journals by departments. Those lists follow:

MARA, titles listed 3 or more times (57 titles listed in all):

American Shipper	3
Journal of Commerce	5
Lloyd's List of Shipowners	3
Lloyd's Maritime Law Newsletter	5
New York Times	4
Professional Mariner	6
World Shipbuilding Abstracts	3

MARB, titles listed 5 or more times. See "WFSC" also. 111 titles listed in all

Animal Behaviour	11
Aquatic Mammals	5
Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology	7
Biological Bulletin	5
Canadian Journal of Zoology	10
Ecology	11
Estuaries	6
Fishery Bulletin	8
Journal of Experimental Marine Biology...	7
Journal of Mammalogy	7
Marine Biology	12
Marine Ecology	5
Marine Ecology Progress Series	9
Marine Mammal Science	14
Oecologia	5
Wetlands	5

MARE 22 titles listed once each

MARS Titles requested 4 or more times. 114 titles listed.

Analytical Chemistry	4
Chemical Physics Letters	4
Earth and Planetary Science Letters	5
Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta	4
International Journal of Quantum Chemistry	6
Journal of Chemical Education	4
Journal of Computational Chemistry	5
Journal of Mathematical Chemistry	4
Journal of Physical Chemistry	4
Journal of the Am. Chemical Society	7
Marine Chemistry	8

MART 15 titles listed, the following twice each:

Ocean Navigator  
Professional Mariner

MASE 31 titles listed. The following, two or more times:

Applied Ocean Research	2
Civil Engineering	4
Coastal Engineering	4
Journal of Coastal Research	2
Journal of Fluid Mechanics	2
Journal of Fluids Engineering	2
Journal of Offshore Mechanics & Arctic Engineering	3
Journal of Waterway, Port, Coastal, and Ocean....	2
Ocean Engineering	4
Offshore Engineering	2
Oil & Gas Engineering	2

## DISCUSSION

Sampling of survey respondents was self-selecting. Each graduate student and faculty member received a survey and it was up to them to be self-motivated enough to fill it out and turn it in. Their response rates were quite high.

Undergraduate student sampling was even more self-selective since they had to make an effort to get the survey in the first place, and then fill it out and hand it in. No attempts were made at random sampling and results can not be considered scientifically valid, only a general indicator of interest.

At least one department was fearful their journals (non-marine science, but an area of active faculty research and publication) were targeted for cuts AND desired even more titles to be purchased and their response rate was almost 100%. The most active members of that faculty use the library extensively to do their work on theoretical chemical physics.

The TAMUG Library Committee is continuing to look at rational ways to select, deselect, and maintain current journal subscriptions to serve our user population in a way that both balances the budget (and looks for additional sources of revenue) and is a best fit for the needs of the community. The immediate impact of the survey is to add a subscription to Canadian Journal of Zoology. Marine Ecology Progress Series looks like a very desirable addition from survey results and interlibrary lending activity, but at an annual subscription rate in excess of \$3200, and the anticipated cost of filling in the extensive backfile, it will be difficult to do so.

The importance of this survey is its open-ended approach to look beyond current subscriptions. EBSCO, the subscription agent for Williams Library, has provided five year summary reports for the titles that are maintained. Those reports show the costs for the same titles have increased 50% in aggregate over the cost of five years ago. The

Library has been fortunate in getting increased funding over that time period, but a significant amount of journal costs have come at the expense of books: our book buying had decreased significantly to support the same list of journals. Williams Library has done considerable cutting of subscriptions and has added virtually no new titles. This survey considers titles for additions as well as maintenance of most-needed current subscriptions.