

MAŁGORZATA KOWALSKA-CHRZANOWSKA
Institute of Information and Communication Research
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
e-mail: koma@umk.pl
ORCID 0000-0002-2839-5732

PAWEŁ MARZEC
Institute of Information and Communication Research
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
e-mail: marzec@umk.pl
ORCID 0000-0003-0300-2266

NON-USERS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN TORUŃ – RESEARCH ON THE REASONS FOR NOT USE LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY STUDENTS OF NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ



Dr. hab. Małgorzata Kowalska-Chrzanowska, university professor in the Department of Information Space Research at the Institute of Information and Communication Research, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Her research interests revolve around topics such as: applications of modern technologies in libraries, open collaboration models (open innovation, crowdsourcing, citizen science), scholarly communication, data science, disinformation and fact-checking, information and media literacy. Selected publications: "The use of games in citizen science based on findings from the EyeWire user study," *Games and Culture*

2025, vol. 20, issue 2, pp. 190-213 (co-author); *Biblioteki dla (nie)obecnych: badania, strategie i praktyki włączania* (Libraries for the (un)present: research, strategies and practices of inclusion), Warsaw 2025 (editor); "Trendy publikacyjne w badaniach nad nauką obywatelską – perspektywa nauk społecznych," (Publication trends

in research on citizen science – a social science perspective), *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia ad Bibliothecarum Scientiam Pertinentia* 2024, vol. 22, pp. 459-477; *Metody i narzędzia budowania społecznej odporności na dezinformację: od fact-checkingu po edukację medialną* (Methods and tools for building social resilience to disinformation: from fact-checking to media education), Toruń 2024 (co-author); *Crowdsourcing internetowy – pozytywny wymiar partycypacji społecznej. Konteksty – istota – uwarunkowania* (Internet crowdsourcing – a positive dimension of social participation. Contexts – essence – conditions), Warsaw 2015; *Dygitalizacja zbiorów bibliotek polskich* (Digitization of Polish library collections) Warszawa 2007.



Paweł Marzec, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Information Space Research at the Institute of Information and Communication Research, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. His research interests include: evaluation of website quality, internet technologies used in libraries, information architecture of websites, and web analytics. Selected publications: "Remote usability testing carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic on the example of Primo VE implementation in an Academic Library," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 2023, vol 49, issue 3, pp. 1–16 (co-author); "Digital curation and open-source software

in LAM-related publications," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 2023, vol. 55, iss. 4, pp. 935-947 (co-author); *Serwisy internetowe instytucji kultury w Polsce* (Websites of cultural institutions in Poland), Toruń 2020 (co-author); *Oceny eksperckie w badaniu użyteczności bibliotecznych serwisów internetowych* (Expert evaluations in usability testing of library websites), Toruń 2019.

KEYWORDS: Non-users of libraries. Library users. Academic libraries. Student surveys. University Library in Toruń. Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

ABSTRACT: Thesis/Purpose of the article – This article presents the results of research concerning the reasons why students of Nicolaus Copernicus University (*Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, UMK*) do not use the resources and services of the University Library in Toruń (BU), conducted in the academic year 2022/2023. **Method** – The research was conducted using a diagnostic survey method. The questionnaire contained 13 questions relating to the use and non-use of BU resources and services, as well as of other types of libraries, the adequacy of services provided by the BU, methods of obtaining materials in the learning process and for completing the study program, reading preferences, and the general attitude of the respondents towards library institutions. **Conclusions** – Due to the small sample size, the research results are not representative. Nevertheless, they can serve as an important signal for academic library managers or as a starting point for further (especially applied) research. Furthermore, the conclusions drawn from them correspond to the findings of other researchers in the literature. They demonstrate that the main reasons for not using the library are a lack of need, the possibility of obtaining materials from other sources (including the Internet), and a lack of knowledge about the services offered by the library. While non-use

of the BU correlates with non-use of libraries in general, it is not a consequence of a negative attitude of students towards library institutions. Students' reading habits show that not using libraries does not translate into a low level of reading. Moreover, the analysis of the research results shows that, according to UMK students who are active users of the BU, the current offer is sufficient and adequate to their needs.

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing environment of libraries significantly impacts the decrease in the number of users, and even the complete departure from libraries of users who independently and intuitively use free and easily accessible digital sources and resources (cf. Center for Public Opinion Research, 2021; National Library, 2024; Central Statistical Office, 2024; Lubimyczytać.pl et al., 2024). This situation means that the challenge for libraries is not only to meet the current needs of users but also to attract those who have not previously used libraries (Kuczkowska, 2024).

Studies of library users have been conducted for many years. The literature on the subject contains numerous examples of studies including the results of self-assessment of library activity by various user groups (e.g., Borowski, 2011; Kędzierska, 2015; Orzoł & Wojciechowska, 2021; Aleksandrowicz & Bernacki, 2022; Babicz, 2024), as well as studies demonstrating a positive correlation between library use and better academic performance or success in many areas of life (Brown & Malenfant, 2017; Scoulas & De Groote, 2019; Anderson & Vega García, 2020; Mayer et al., 2020). These studies, although providing interesting insights, do not include non-users and do not diagnose the reasons for not using libraries. This type of analysis is conducted much less frequently. This is due to several reasons: firstly, discrepancies in defining the nature and level of non-use of libraries (cf. Budrowska et al., 2020); secondly, difficulties in reaching this part of the target population of libraries (cf. Martin, 1976; Schlichter & Pemberton, 1992; McCarthy, 1994); and thirdly, the lack of a consistent methodology for studying non-users (cf. McNicol, 2004; Booth, 2008; Dempsey, 2018). Consequently, non-users are studied to a very limited extent, almost incidentally or as an afterthought in studies of library users.

Research on non-users of academic libraries has been conducted since at least the 1970s. The greatest intensification of this work has been observed since 2000, especially in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and France. An analysis of 69 publications containing the results of studies on students who do not use academic libraries, conducted by Amelie Brunskill and Rosie Hanneke (2021), shows that the most frequently used method in studies of non-users is the diagnostic survey – printed and online questionnaires and interviews; focus groups and existing data

are used less frequently. These types of studies include both academic staff and students (of a specific discipline/field/university/faculty/mode of study/year), and the number of participants varies widely: from 11 (Ouellette, 2011) to 50,000 (Thompson et al., 2007) participants. In their analyses, researchers focus either on diagnosing the reasons for general non-use of libraries (e.g., Whittaker et al., 1990; Tipton, 2001; Vondracek, 2007), or on selected aspects of non-use – e.g., physical space (Hall & Kapa, 2015), print collections (Rose-Wiles et al., 2020), electronic resources (Umukoro & Tiamiyu, 2017; Oh & Colón-Aguirre, 2019), or specific services (Jameson et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). Interestingly, the matter of non-use of libraries is interpreted in many different ways (as not using the library at all; not using its specific services and resources; not using it for a specific period: two weeks, a month, a semester, or a year; using the library building but not using the collections and services; using the library irregularly or sporadically; ceasing to use it at all) (cf. Vondracek, 2007; Toner, 2008; Kisby, 2011; Luo & Buer, 2015; Umukoro & Tiamiyu, 2017). Previous studies of students reveal similar reasons for not using academic libraries. Most often, these are a lack of need, a lack of awareness of specific library services, and unfamiliarity with the rules for using a given resource. Less frequently mentioned are insufficient or outdated collections, architectural, technological, and administrative barriers to accessing resources, unfriendly or unhelpful staff, fear of the library, or resorting to alternative sources. A review of existing research results shows that most non-users have a positive attitude towards library institutions, although the need to intensify efforts to promote the services and resources offered by them and to provide training to prepare users to utilize them is also recognized (Kiilu & Otiike, 2016; Brunskill & Hanneke, 2021).

This article analyzes the results of a study of students at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (*Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika*, UMK) who belonged to the population served by the University Library (*Biblioteka Uniwersytecka*, BU) in the 2022/2023 academic year. The main objective of the research was to identify the main reasons for not using the library. Indirectly, the research aimed to reveal students' preferences regarding the most frequently used library services and resources, as well as methods of obtaining materials and using various sources of information. It also aimed to verify whether the non-use of the BU's services is a consequence of a negative attitude of students towards libraries. When designing the research, the authors assumed – in accordance with the standard PN-ISO 16439:2019-11 "Information and documentation. Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries" (Polish Committee for Standardization, 2019) – that a non-user of the BU is a person who, for at least 12 months preceding the study, did not perform any activity recorded by the library

system, did not use its physical and virtual resources, and did not visit the library building to use its premises or infrastructure or participate in events organized by it.

The initiated research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What percentage of UMK students do not use the resources and services of the University Library?
2. What are the reasons why students do not use the University Library's resources and services?
3. Does not using the University Library's resources correlate with not using other types of libraries?
4. From what sources do students obtain study materials if they do not use the University Library or other libraries?
5. What are the expectations of those who do not use the University Library and libraries in general regarding the services they offer?
6. What types of information sources do students prefer?
7. What is the attitude of students towards library institutions as such?

The authors assumed that the responses collected during the research would provide detailed information on the level and reasons for not using the University Library's services, which would allow not only for a better understanding of students' needs, expectations, and barriers to using library resources, but also for developing strategies to improve the functioning of the institution, adapt the service offerings, increase the accessibility and attractiveness of resources, and promote the use of the library among students and potential users.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data was collected using the CAWI technique. After its content was agreed upon with the University Library Management, the survey questionnaire was made available in the LimeSurvey Survey System on the server of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.¹ The survey consisted of 13 questions, four of which required a single choice, seven allowed multiple choices and the option to provide a personal opinion ("other"), one was based on a 5-point Likert scale, and one allowed for a free-form response. In addition to the main questions, the questionnaire included a demographic section containing questions aimed at obtaining data about the respondents, such as: gender, faculty, field of study, year of study, mode of study, and place of residence.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part included questions concerning the use and non-use of the University Library's

¹ The archived survey questionnaire is available in the Nicolaus Copernicus University Repository at the following address: <https://repozytorium.umk.pl/handle/item/7255>.

resources and services, as well as other types of libraries, and services provided by the University Library that respondents could potentially use in the following 12 months. The second part contained questions relating to the methods of obtaining materials in the learning process and the implementation of the study program, reading preferences, and the general attitude of the respondents towards library institutions.

The research was conducted anonymously. No data enabling any identification of respondents was collected during the study (including tokens, IP addresses, date and time of completion, etc.). A link to the survey questionnaire was sent via university email to all students of Nicolaus Copernicus University who were active in the University Study Service System in the 2022/2023 academic year. The survey was available online from January 15, 2023, to May 31, 2023.

Because respondents were allowed to provide free-form answers during the study, after the completion of the study this data was aggregated and then subjected to content analysis. Subsequently, statements with similar content were grouped into thematic categories (e.g., lack of time, lack of knowledge about services, disagreement with the offer, fear of using the services). Due to the fact that the free-form responses formulated by the respondents were very similar to the predefined answers, they are presented together in the tables below.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Although the survey questionnaire was sent to over 17,000 students, only 195 responses were received, of which 144 were qualified for further analysis (fully completed questionnaires).² The respondents included 103 (71.5%) women and 41 (28.5%) men. The vast majority of respondents were full-time students – 136 (94.4%). The largest group consisted of undergraduate students – 79 (54.8%) people. Thirty-seven (25.6%) people declared they were studying in the first or second year of master's studies. Among the respondents, there were also nine (0.06%) representatives of doctoral programs. The remaining individuals were studying in integrated master's programs or 4-year engineering programs. In total, the respondents declared studies in 53 different fields. The largest groups were students from the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Historical Sciences – 41 (28.5%) and 37 (25.7%) respectively. The remaining students represented 12 other faculties (see Table 1).

² The analysis was unable to link the results to the respondents' place of residence due to insufficient data or incomplete responses in this regard, which prevented reliable conclusions from being drawn. Therefore, the authors decided to refrain from presenting statistical analyses of respondents taking into account the size of the town or city in which they live.

Table 1. Respondents by faculty at Nicolaus Copernicus University.

Department name	Number of people	Percentage of responses received
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences	41	28.5%
Faculty of Historical Sciences	37	25.7%
Faculty of Economics and Management	17	11.8%
Faculty of Humanities	14	9.7%
Faculty of Law and Administration	9	6.3%
Faculty of Biological and Veterinary Sciences	8	5.6%
Faculty of Fine Arts	4	2.8%
Faculty of Chemistry	3	2.1%
Faculty of Earth Sciences and Spatial Management	3	2.1%
Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science	3	2.1%
Faculty of Physics, Astronomy and Applied Computer Science	2	1.4%
Faculty of Political Science and Security Studies	1	0.7%
Faculty of Health Sciences (Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz)	1	0.7%
Faculty of Medicine (Collegium Medicum in Bydgoszcz)	1	0.7%
Total	144	100.0%

Source: Authors.

2. NON-USERS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN TORUŃ AND OTHER TYPES OF LIBRARIES.

Only 34 (23.6%) of all respondents (n=144) were non-users. Twenty-five people (73.5%) had never used the library before, seven people (20.6%) had used it more than a year before the study, and two (5.9%) more than three years before the study. The most frequent reasons given for not using the library (multiple-choice question – 63 responses in total) were lack of need (15 people; 25.4%) and the possibility of obtaining materials from other sources (from friends and through purchase) (13 people; 22%).³ Nine

³ The survey questionnaire included the aggregate category “no need” – commonly used in studies of non-users of libraries (cf. Brunskill & Hanneke, 2021). The authors are aware that this category may have been understood differently by respondents and may also encompass other reasons indicated in

people (15.3%) also indicated that they obtain the necessary information from the internet.⁴ Seven respondents (28%) were unaware of the services offered by the University Library. Lack of time and using the services of other types of libraries were cited by 16% of students each. Three people (5.1%) indicated feeling anxious about going to the library. The remaining individuals were dissatisfied with the library's opening hours (3.4%) and the library's offerings (1.7%) (see Table 2). Among the answers other than those suggested in the questionnaire, the following responses formulated independently by the students are noteworthy:

- *I'm afraid that I won't be able to find my way around the library. There are no comfortable places in the reading room, only chairs and tables.*
- *The library website isn't working for me.*
- *I'm not writing my bachelor's thesis yet; I think I'll start using the library when I start writing it.*
- *I feel anxious about how complicated the rules for borrowing materials are, and it's not conveniently located for me.*

Table 2. Reasons for not using the library's resources and services, as indicated by non-users (n=34)

Reasons	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
1	2	3
No need	15	25.4%
I obtain materials from other traditional sources (I borrow from friends, I buy them)	13	22.0%
The materials and information I obtain from the Internet are sufficient for me	9	15.3%
I know little about the services offered by the library	7	11.9%
Lack of time	4	6.8%
I use the services of other libraries	4	6.8%

this study (e.g., no need to use the library due to the availability of materials from other sources, lack of awareness of the possibilities of using library services, as well as other psychological or organizational factors). Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results from the "no need" category (Tables 2 and 3), and the possibility of a wide range of respondent motivations should be taken into account.

⁴ Similarly, the results relating to the category "obtaining sources from the Internet" (Tables 2, 3, 6) should be treated as indicative only, due to the lack of detailed differentiation within this category regarding platforms, tools, or specific resources. This category – like the "lack of time" category – could therefore have been understood differently by the respondents, which implies a risk of imprecision in the results.

1	2	3
I feel anxious about going to the library	3	5.1%
The library's opening hours are not convenient for me	2	3.4%
I don't like using libraries	1	1.7%
The library offers a much smaller selection than bookstores or e-book platforms	1	1.7%
Total	59	100.0%

Source: Authors.

Non-users of the University Library could be encouraged to use its services by increasing the library's activity in various areas of library operations. Of the 34 respondents, eight (23.5%) pointed out the need to eliminate unnecessary formalities and to describe the rules for accessing the services offered in a more transparent way. Another six people (17.6%) indicated the need to develop various forms of promoting the library's activities. Five people (14.7%) suggested increasing the number of available resources, both in traditional and online versions. Four people (11.7%) drew attention to the need to create additional spaces – for individual and group work, startup activities, and also to improve conditions in the open access section. Three people (8.8%) suggested introducing additional services (e.g., picking up ordered publications at the library branch in Bydgoszcz or the possibility of viewing excerpts of books online without having to borrow them). Another three (8.8%) declared their willingness to use the library's services to meet their information needs related to their studies (including, for example, writing a diploma thesis). Five people (20%) were unable to indicate what could convince them to use the University Library's resources and services.

UMK students were also asked whether they had used other types of libraries in the last 12 months. This question aimed to reveal whether there was a correlation between not using the University Library and not using other libraries. The answers to this question were fairly evenly distributed – out of 144 respondents, 74 (51.4%) were users of other types of libraries, while 70 (48.6%) were non-users. Among the users of other types of libraries, users of public libraries predominated (81.5%), followed by users of libraries of other universities (47.3%). A small number of people (6.8%) also indicated school libraries. In the group of non-users, the most frequently given reason for not using libraries was the same as in the case of the University Library, i.e., lack of need (31.4% of

responses). The answers indicating the possibility of obtaining materials from friends or through purchase (18.2%) and obtaining sources from the Internet (17%) were also quite frequent. The answers “lack of time,” “inappropriate library operating rules,” and “poor library location” were each given 12 times (17.1%). Other reasons mentioned included a lack of attractive library offerings (4.4%), inconvenient opening hours (3.8%), and dissatisfaction with their services (2.5%) (see Table 3). Two people (2.8%) gave other reasons in the “other” field:

- *I’m not sufficiently familiar with the rules of how libraries operate. It’s uncharted territory for me, and I feel uncomfortable there.*
- *Stress.*

Table 3. Reasons for not using other types of libraries as indicated by non-users (n=70)

Reasons	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
No need	50	31.4%
I obtain materials from other traditional sources (borrowing from friends, buying)	29	18.2%
The materials and information I obtain from the internet are sufficient for me	27	17.0%
Lack of time	12	7.5%
Inconvenient location of libraries	12	7.5%
I don’t like the way libraries operate (e.g., short loan periods, fees)	12	7.5%
Unattractive library offerings	7	4.4%
Inconvenient library opening hours	6	3.8%
I was not satisfied with the library services (I didn’t find what I needed, I didn’t get the information I was looking for)	4	2.5%
Total	159	100.0%

Source: Authors.

Among all respondents (n=144), there were 23 individuals (16%) who were non-users of both the University Library (BU) and other types of libraries. 11 individuals (7.6%) did not use the University Library but used the services of other libraries. Among the respondents, there was also a group of 47 people (32.6%) who used the University Library but

were not users of other libraries. 63 people (43.8%) identified themselves as users of both the University Library and other libraries (see Table 4). This data allowed for an examination of the relationship between non-use of the University Library and non-use of other libraries. For this purpose, an asymptotic chi-square test of independence was used. The analysis resulted in $p = 0.011 < 0.05$, which indicates a significant relationship for respondents in both groups (see Table 5).⁵

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of non-users of the University Library * non-users of other types of libraries (n=144)

Number of people	Users of other libraries	Non users of other libraries	Total
User of BU (University Library)	63 (43.8%)	47 (32.6%)	110 (76.4%)
Non-user of BU	11 (7.6%)	23 (16%)	34 (23.6%)
Total	74 (51.4%)	70 (48.6%)	144 (100%)

Source: Authors.

Table 5. Chi-square tests

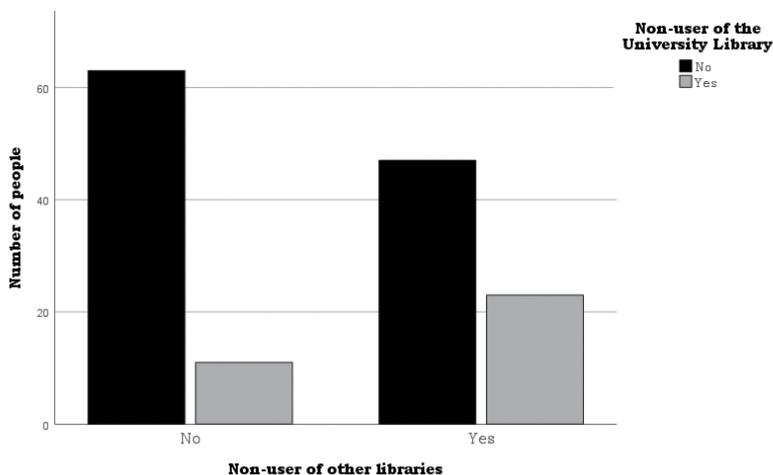
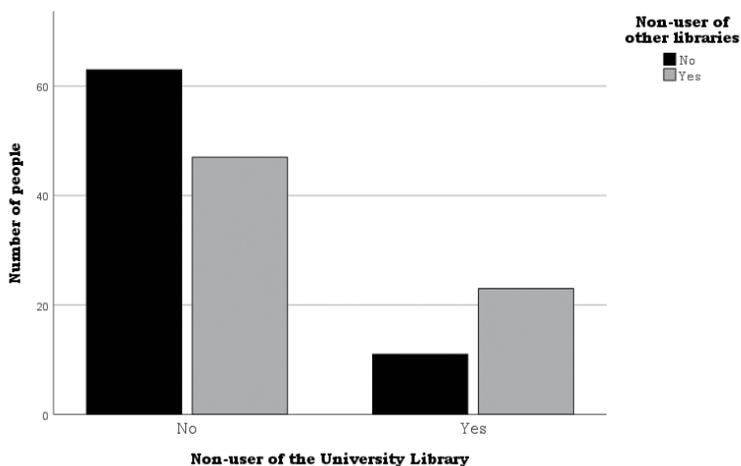
Value		df*	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)
Pearson's chi-squared test	6.456**	1	.011
N valid observations	144		

Source: Authors.

* Df (*degrees of freedom*) – The number of independent pieces of information used to calculate a test statistic. In the case of the chi-squared test, the degrees of freedom are a crucial parameter that affects the interpretation of the results and the selection of the critical value from the chi-squared distribution table. The number of degrees of freedom can be equated to the number of independent random variables that influence the result.

** 0.0% of cells (0) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.53.

⁵ The statistical calculations contained in Tables 4 and 5 were performed using PS IMAGO PRO 10 software with the IBM SPSS Statistics 29 analytical engine by Dr. Natalia Soja-Kukielka from the Statistical Analysis Center of Nicolaus Copernicus University.



Charts 1 and 2. The nature of the relationship between the group of non-users of the University Library and non-users of other types of libraries.

Source: Authors.

Students who were non-users of both the University Library and other types of libraries ($n=23$) declared that they intend to use the services and resources of the University Library within the next 12 months. Their primary interest was in access to copying facilities and Wi-Fi (10 people each, 11.9%). Some also indicated interest in using the library's infrastructure: study rooms (9 people, 10.7%), group work rooms (7 people, 8.3%), general relaxation areas (6 people, 7.1%), computers located in the library (4 people, 4.8%), and on-site collections (4 people, 4.8%). Additionally, respondents expressed interest in services such as: on-demand digitization (8 people, 9.5%), borrowing materials (books, audiobooks) for home use (7 people, 8.3%), including through interlibrary loan (2 people, 2.4%). Respondents

also declared interest in participating in cultural events organized by the library (e.g., exhibitions, author meetings – 4 people, 4.8%; library training – 2 people, 2.4%). Five people (6%) indicated that they would visit the University Library to search for information (related to, for example, their study program, daily life, etc.).

3. SOURCES FOR OBTAINING MATERIALS BY NON-USERS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND OTHER TYPES OF LIBRARIES.

Regarding the methods of obtaining information, materials, and books necessary for studying and completing the curriculum by students who do not use either the University Library or other libraries (n=23), the analysis of the research results showed that the main source of obtaining them was the Internet (23 people, 39.6%). Other sources mentioned included friends and fellow students (19 people, 32.7%) and purchases in bookstores, both traditional and online (14 people, 24.1%). Two people (3.4%) also indicated lecturers as a source (see Table 6).

Table 6. Sources of learning materials used by non-users of the University Library and other types of libraries (n=23)

Sources	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
Internet	23	39.6%
Shopping in bookstores (including online bookstores and online auctions)	14	24.1%
Friends, fellow students	19	32.7%
Other	2	3.4%
Total	58	100.0%

Source: Authors.

4. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY USERS

Although the primary goal of the research was to understand the reasons for not using the University Library's services and resources, the study also revealed the preferences of students who actively use the library's resources and services (n=110). It showed that the vast majority of respondents most frequently used the service of borrowing materials for home use (61 people, 23.1%). Online resources were also very popular (50 people, 18.9%), as was using the library space (36 people, 13.6%) and using the collections on-site (34 people, 12.9%). The least popular services were on-demand digitization (4 people, 1.5%) and library training courses (2 people, 0.8%) (see Table 5).

Table 7. Services offered by the University Library, most frequently chosen by UMK students who actively use them (n=110)

Library Services	Number of responses	Percentage of responses given
Digitization on demand (ordering digital copies of library or deposited materials)	4	1.5%
Computers available in the library	10	3.8%
Librarian assistance in finding necessary information and library materials	21	8.0%
Library space (for work and study)	36	13.6%
Wi-fi network	18	6.8%
Library training	2	0.8%
Copying devices (e.g., photocopier, printers, scanner)	10	3.8%
Cultural events	7	2.7%
Borrowing library materials for home use (books, audiobooks)	61	23.1%
Interlibrary loan	11	4.2%
Library resources available online (books, articles, databases, catalogs, KPBC)	50	18.9%
Library collections available on-site (magazines, newspapers, books)	34	12.9%
Total	264	100.0%

Source: Authors.

5. READING HABITS OF STUDENTS

In addition to information about the most frequently used library services and reasons for not using them, the study also provided information on students' reading habits (n=144). Almost half of the respondents (66 people, 45.8%) read between 1 and 10 books in the 12 months preceding the study. A larger number of books were read by 34 people (23.6%). 12 people read between 31 and 50 books (8.3%), and 13 people (9%) declared they had read more than 50 books. 12 people (8.3%) did not read any books during this period. Seven people (4.9%) were unable to specify the exact number of books read. During the same period, 48 (33.3%) respondents read between 11 and 30 book chapters. A slightly smaller number of people (42, 29.2%) declared they had read between 1 and 10 chapters. The answer "31-50 chapters" was chosen by 19 people

(13.2%), and more than 50 chapters were a source of information for 17 (11.8%) of them. Among the respondents, there were also people (7, 4.9%) who did not read any book chapters or chose the answer "difficult to say" (11, 7.6%). In the case of journal articles, most students (44, 30.6%) declared reading between 1 and 10 articles. A larger number (from 11 to 30) were read by 24 (16.7%) respondents. 19 people (13.2%) read between 30 and 50 articles. In contrast, 18 (12.5%) respondents stated that they had used more than 50 articles. Twenty-one (14.6%) respondents did not read any articles, and 18 (12.5%) were unable to specify the number (see chart 3).

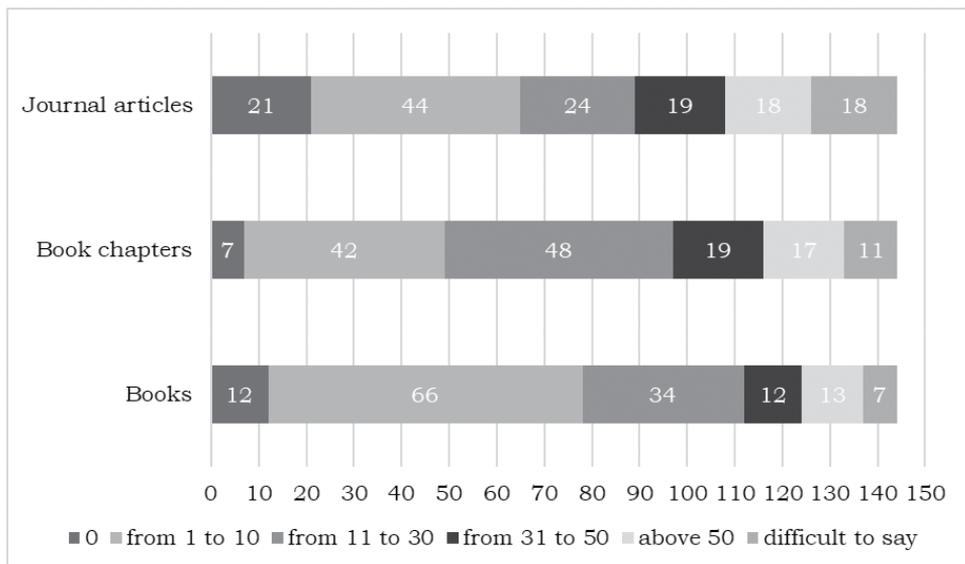


Chart 3. Number of items read by UMK students (n=144) in the 12 months preceding the study.
Source: Authors.

6. STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LIBRARIES

The authors of the study assumed that students' attitudes towards libraries as institutions, or their stereotypical image established in society, might translate into a reluctance to use library resources and services. However, the analysis of the collected data proved that respondents perceive libraries as necessary and useful institutions. One hundred eight people (75%) strongly agreed with this statement, and another 30 people (20.8%) expressed moderate agreement. Respondents also expressed positive opinions regarding the provision of access to specialized collections and information that would be difficult to find elsewhere than in libraries. Seventy-two people (50%) strongly agreed with this statement, and 49 (34%) agreed with it. The distribution of opinions on

the modernity of libraries and their adaptation to user expectations was more varied. Forty-eight people (33.3%) agreed with this statement, and 30 respondents (20.8%) expressed strong agreement. However, it is worth noting that as many as 43 people (29.9%) had no opinion on this matter, and 20 respondents (13.9%) disagreed with this statement. Most respondents expressed positive opinions about the ease of using libraries due to their convenient opening hours and location. Fifty-three (36.8%) respondents agreed with this statement, and another 32 (22.2%) expressed strong agreement. In contrast, 26 (18.1%) other respondents expressed negative opinions, and an additional six did so strongly. Among the respondents, there were also 27 (18.8%) people who had no opinion on this matter. Only 29 (20.1%) people agreed with the statement that libraries are becoming less and less necessary in the age of the Internet, and nine (4.9%) strongly agreed with it. Fifty-five (38.2%) people disagreed with this statement, and an additional 44 (30.6%) strongly disagreed with it (see chart 4).

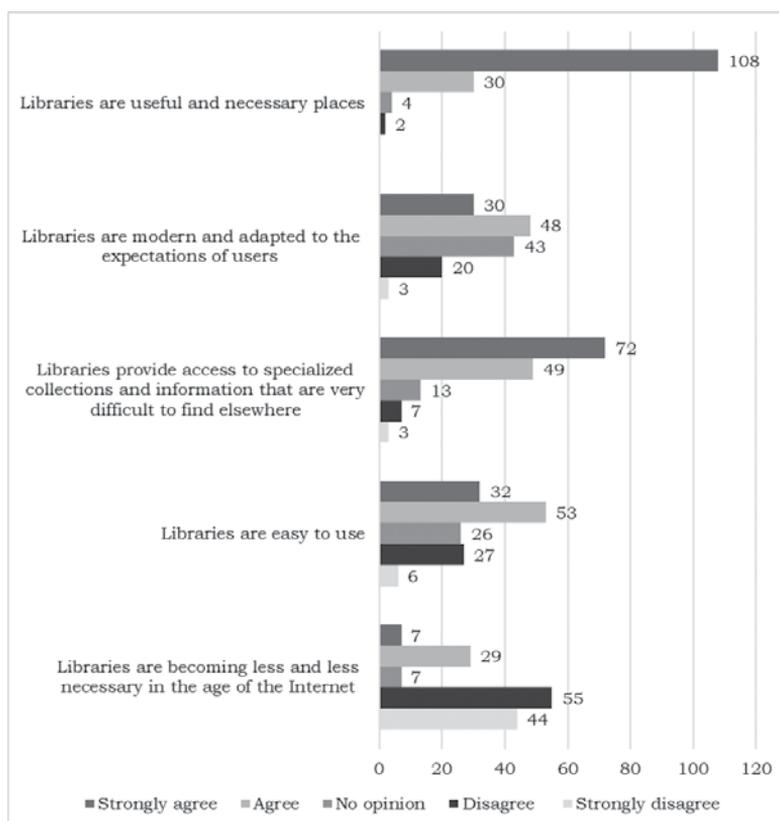


Chart 4. Number of responses received from UMK students (n=144) in response to the question regarding their attitude towards libraries.

Source: Authors.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Although the University Library and the UMK Promotion Office were involved in distributing the survey questionnaire, the small number of participants in the study does not allow for the extrapolation of the results to the entire population of UMK students. The low response rate may be due to the inconvenient timing of the research (the research period included the time immediately before and after the examination session, the Easter holidays, May Day, and the student festival), a lack of promotion of the research, and a strictly planned monitoring strategy. Perhaps the students found the topic of library activities uninteresting or did not want to disclose information about their own reading habits. Regardless of the reason for the low interest in the survey, the authors confirmed their observation that studying non-users can be difficult to implement, and this is the main reason for the lack of scientific work on this topic.

Although the research results are not representative, the conclusions drawn from them correspond to the findings of other researchers. Firstly, the data analysis confirms that studying non-users requires a precise definition of the nature of *non-use* of libraries, so that there is no doubt as to which activities are considered non-use and which are considered occasional, incidental, or indirect use. Secondly, conducting this type of research implies the need to reach non-users in various ways and to plan research over a longer time horizon (survey research, although simple to implement, does not guarantee a high response rate). Thirdly, in the course of such research, data is also obtained from existing users of the library, because it is impossible to limit the research exclusively to the population of non-users.

Due to the non-representative nature of the research, it is difficult to make judgments regarding the demographic characteristics of UMK students who do not use the University Library. Based on the results obtained, it can only be cautiously assumed that non-users of the University Library are primarily men (22 out of 34 non-users), and are students in their first years of study.

The reasons for not using the University Library correspond to those found in the literature on the subject (see, e.g., Musavi & Harvey, 1984; Whittaker et al., 1990; Tipton, 2001; Frank & Bothmann, 2007; Porat & Fine, 2009; Owens et al., 2023). Students at Nicolaus Copernicus University most often cite a lack of need to use the library, the possibility of obtaining materials from other sources (including the Internet), and a lack of knowledge about the services offered by the library. Interestingly, the last reason is mentioned in the context of not using both the University Library and other types of libraries. Relatively frequently in both cases, fear of using libraries and a lack of time for such activity also appear.

When beginning the research, it was assumed that not using the University Library might correlate with not using libraries in general and be a consequence of students' negative attitude towards library institutions. While a relatively large number of non-users of the University Library who also do not use other types of libraries (67% of 34) confirms the validity of the first hypothesis, the research results contradict the second, as all identified non-users showed a positive attitude towards libraries, considering them modern and offering access to specialized collections and information that are difficult to find elsewhere. In this context, the dominant number of responses "I don't need to use libraries" and the declaration of most non-users regarding their willingness to use the resources or services of the University Library in the near future are particularly surprising.

The analysis of the research results showed that the largest group among UMK students consisted of active users of the University Library. Their opinions indicate that the library's offerings are sufficient and adequate to their needs: the most popular services were borrowing materials for home use and access to online resources, while the least popular were library training courses and on-demand digitization services. The view regarding the adequacy of the existing library offerings can also be formulated based on the opinions of non-users, who listed among the services they would like to use in the future those already available. Only three out of 144 people (2%) expected the introduction of new solutions. Similarly to participants in other studies (cf. e.g., Connaway et al., 2007; Frank et al., 2007; Abdullah & Gibb, 2008; Cassidy et al., 2012; Jameson et al., 2019), students who did not use the University Library highlighted the need for greater promotion of library services, elimination of unnecessary formalities, clearer descriptions of access rules to offered services, and improvements to the library building's infrastructure. Interestingly, despite reporting some problems with understanding the rules for using the library's resources and services, fear of the library, or problems with accessing its website, none of the non-users suggested implementing instructional training, guides, or educational programs for users, or modifying the website.

Among all the students surveyed (n=144), the vast majority declared reading activity. Only 13% of respondents had not read any books or even a single excerpt. The same number also did not read any academic articles. The high reading activity of UMK students is consistent with the general trend observed by institutions monitoring the state of readership in Poland. Research conducted by the Institute of Books and Reading of the National Library in 2023 shows that the highest number of readers are among students (schoolchildren and university students), and the fewest among the oldest generations. However, only 7% of people who declare reading books admit to reading at least seven volumes a year (Zasacka et

al., 2024). Among the surveyed students, this figure was 45.8%. The reading habits of the students therefore prove that the initial assumption that not using libraries translates into a low level of reading among students was incorrect.

Almost all of the non-users identified in the study (both of the University Library and other types of libraries) (94.3% of 34) indicated the Internet as the main source of information, materials, and books needed to complete their study program. A significantly smaller group of people (24.1%) indicated making purchases. This result contradicts the findings of researchers from the Institute of Book and Reading of the National Library, according to whom book purchases are the most popular method of obtaining books among all readers regardless of age (Zasacka et al., 2024).

Although the conducted research had a limited scope, there is no doubt that it provided knowledge about the reasons why students do not use the University Library, as well as the adequacy of the existing offer in relation to the needs of its users. These studies should certainly be repeated to obtain a more representative sample, and consequently, to determine the extent to which the diagnosed behaviors are characteristic of the entire population of UMK students. In this context, it is worth considering (in addition to quantitative methods) the use of qualitative methods. This could help in creating a typology or personas of students who do not use the library, which could be used to determine how different definitions of non-use translate into a different picture of the library's impact.

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