

# Annual Librarian Survey Report

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July 2025

# Foreword



**Ronan Grimes**  
Sales Director – Kortext

It's been a tough year for many academic libraries, with ongoing financial challenges and shifts in library-supplier relationships.

From talking to librarians across the sector, we know that genuine partnerships which evolve with your library's changing needs are more important now than ever.

That's why I'm delighted to introduce this white paper based on the results of our fifth Annual Librarian Survey.

At Kortext, we believe that listening is a fundamental part of successful partnership, and this survey helps us to understand the current challenges and trends in academic libraries.

We're grateful to everyone who took the time to complete our survey and share their thoughts.

This year's results reflect the current climate in higher education: continuing uncertainty about library funding, decreased spending on content, and more concern about the impact of AI.

But it's not all bad news. Our respondents also said that students are still engaging with resources – thanks to innovative library strategies – and there is a continuing upward trend in the use of open content alongside paid-for resources.

I hope you find the following paper interesting and insightful.

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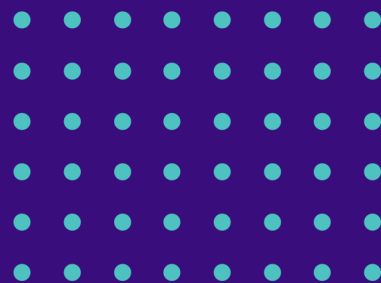
## Introduction

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# Introduction



**The fifth Kortext Annual Librarian Survey, intended for academic libraries in the UK, was conducted during May and June 2025.**

It incorporated both quantitative and qualitative questions to provide a snapshot of current challenges and trends in the higher education sector.

The survey was not restricted to Kortext customers. We received 67 responses, of which 69% were current Kortext customers and 31% were not Kortext customers.

Highlights from the survey findings were shared in our summer webinar, 'Embracing the shift: the power of partnerships', on 8 July 2025.

**In this paper, we present the results of the Kortext Annual Librarian Survey 2025, with comparative data from our previous surveys where available.**

Please note:

For survey results, percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

This year, we have introduced a new category ('Unsure') for some questions, recognising that a respondent's role may not encompass all the areas covered by our survey.



# Key findings

## Finance:

In a challenging financial climate, there is continuing uncertainty about funding and the impact on library resources and services.

## Content:

The results show a significant change from 2024, with academic libraries spending less on digital content in the last 12 months.

## OA and OERs:

Open content continues to be important, with libraries working on projects to integrate more of this content into reading lists.

## Data:

The use of data remains consistent, but respondents indicated that data analytics from suppliers were increasingly valuable.

## Engagement:

Student engagement remains consistent, but results suggest that students are coming on to campus less frequently.

## Generative AI:

Our respondents showed more concern about the impact of AI tools on teaching and learning, with less optimism than in 2024.



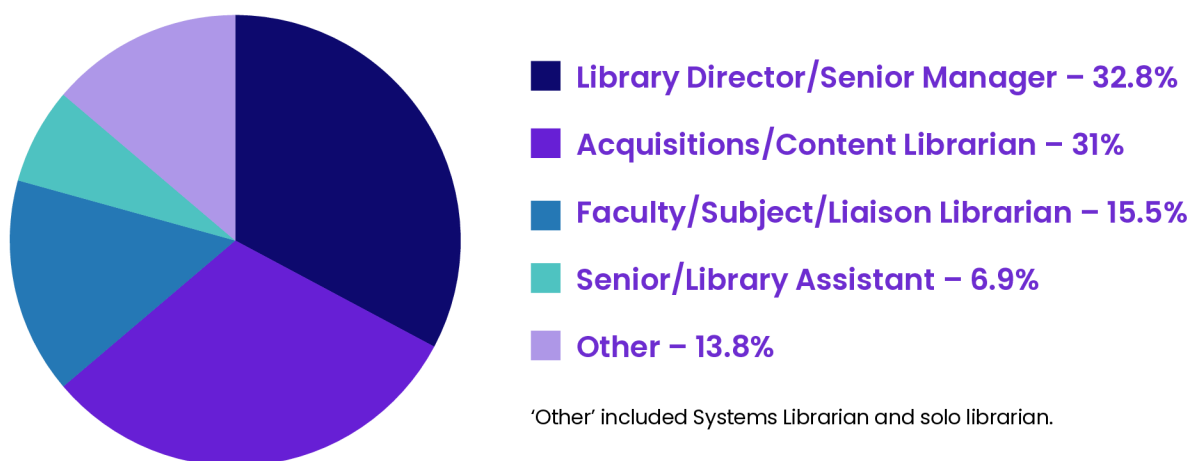
# 1. Who responded to our survey?

We received 67 responses to this year's survey.

Our respondents had the option to remain anonymous, unless they wished to leave their details to enter a prize draw. We have preserved the anonymity of all respondents here.

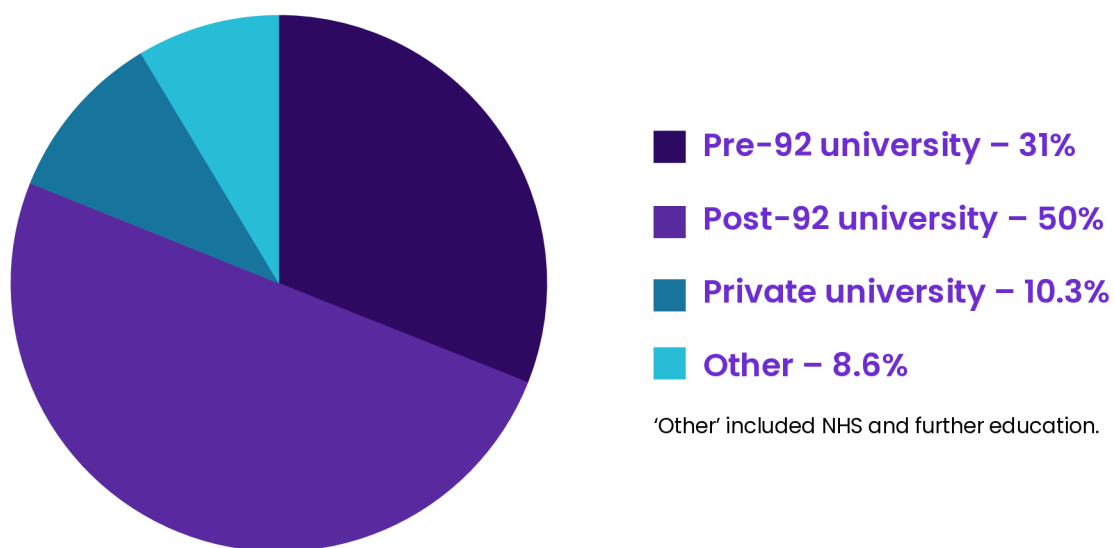
However, we asked respondents to indicate their job role and the type of institution in which they work to establish some context for our overall survey results.

Which category best describes your job role?



## 2. Where do our respondents work?

Which category best describes your institution?

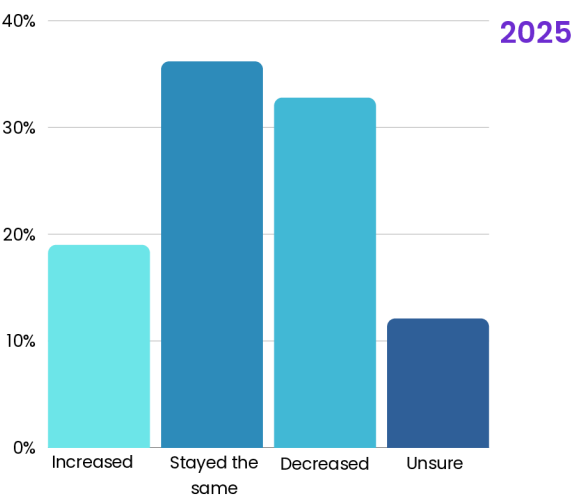


These two questions revealed that Library Directors/Senior Managers and Acquisitions/Content Librarians were more likely to respond to our survey, with over 60% of respondents in these two categories. Half of our respondents work at a post-92 university, while 31% are at a pre-92 university.

# 3. How are libraries purchasing content?

In the last 12 months has your library's digital content spend:

- Increased – 19%
- Stayed the same – 36.2%
- Decreased – 32.8%
- Unsure – 12.1%

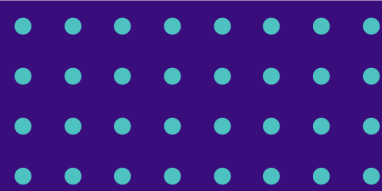
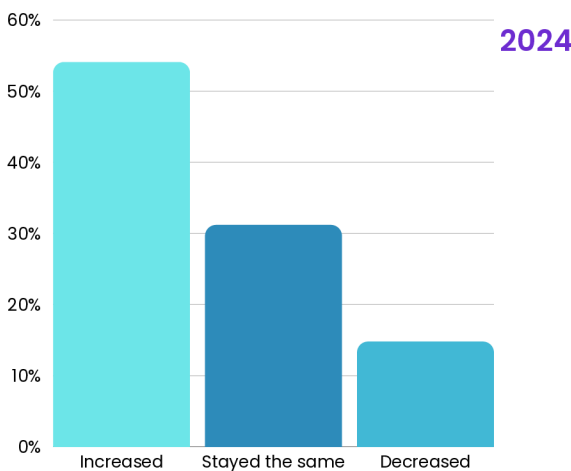


**Conclusion:**

Almost a fifth of respondents said their digital content spend had increased in the last 12 months.

This is a significant change from 2024, when over half of respondents said their digital content spend had increased in the last 12 months.

- Increased – 54.1%
- Stayed the same – 31.2%
- Decreased – 14.8%

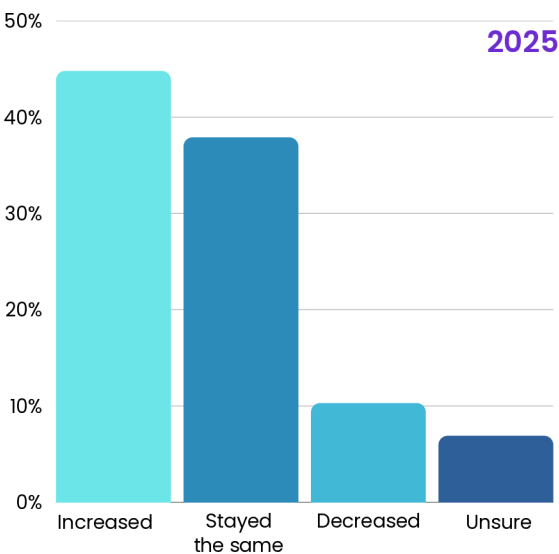




# 4. What are the trends in content provision?

In the last 12 months has the proportion of digital content in your library:

- Increased – 44.8%
- Stayed the same – 37.9%
- Decreased – 10.3%
- Unsure – 6.9%

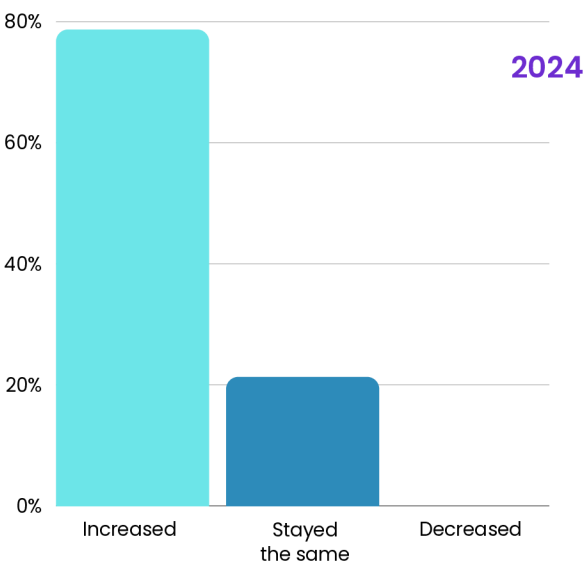


**Conclusion:**

Less than half of respondents said the proportion of digital content had increased in the last 12 months.

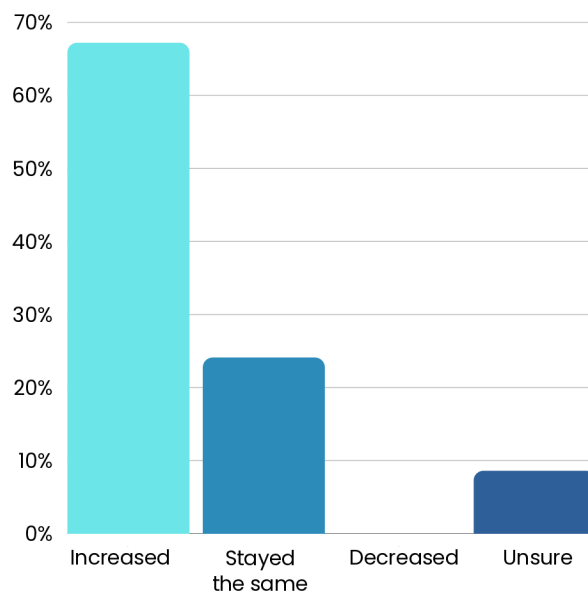
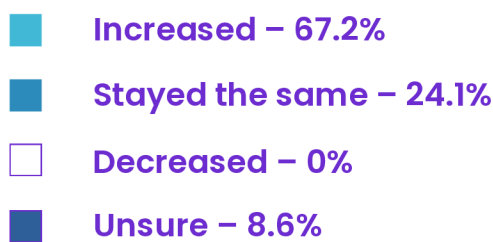
Again, this shows a significant change from 2024, when more than three-quarters of respondents said the proportion of digital content in their library had increased.

- Increased – 78.7%
- Stayed the same – 21.3%
- Decreased – 0%



## 5. What is the importance of OA and OERs?

In the last 12 months has the importance of open content (OA and/or OER) in your library:



### Conclusion:

The majority of respondents said OA and/or OER content had become more important.

This is a slight increase on 2024, when 62.3% of respondents said OA and/or OER content had become more important in the last 12 months.

**'We are looking at ways to make the content more accessible and discoverable to colleagues and students at the institution.'**

**We are working with the team at Kortext to see how we may be able to better leverage the collections in the Kortext platform including title matching to existing reading list content.**

**This is useful information in starting conversations with academic colleagues on embedding OA and OER content within the curriculum when making resource decisions over module delivery.'**

Quote from 2025 survey respondent.

## 5. What is the importance of OA and OERs?

We asked respondents to share an example of how open content (OA and/or OER) is being used at their library.

Five common themes emerged from respondents' answers:

### **Integrating into the discovery layer**

'We have enabled the discovery of more OA collections in our discovery layer. We are actively encouraging the use of this.'

### **Embedding within reading lists**

'Added to reading lists to make them more sustainable, matching content we can't afford to purchase.'

### **Utilising a browser extension**

'We have configured our browser extensions to default to OA alternatives rather than licensed content.'

### **Collaborating with academics**

'Our teaching staff are linking to much more in the way of OA content via their Moodle pages.'

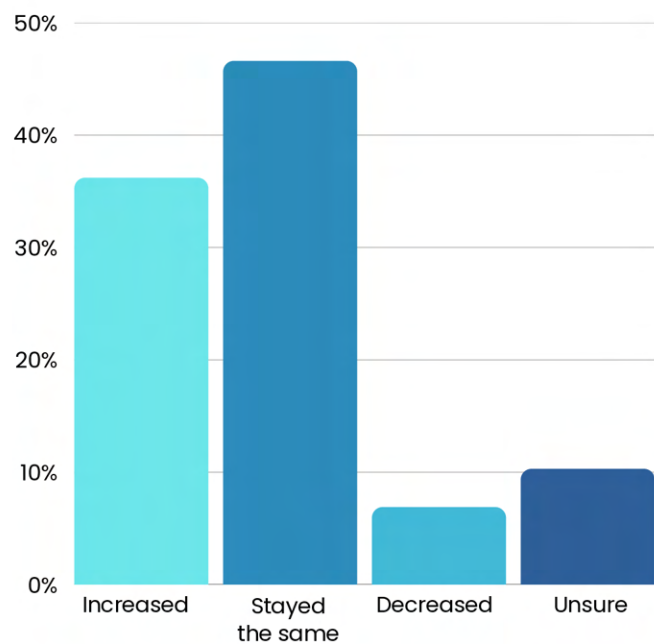
### **Developing more library guidance**

'Increased guidance and support around finding, accessing and using open access articles in reading lists.'

## 6. What are the trends in data usage?

In the last 12 months has your library's use of content usage and/or student engagement analytics:

- Increased – 36.2%
- Stayed the same – 46.6%
- Decreased – 6.9%
- Unsure – 10.3%



### Conclusion:

Over a third of respondents said their use of data analytics had increased in the last 12 months.

These results are largely consistent with those from our 2024 survey.





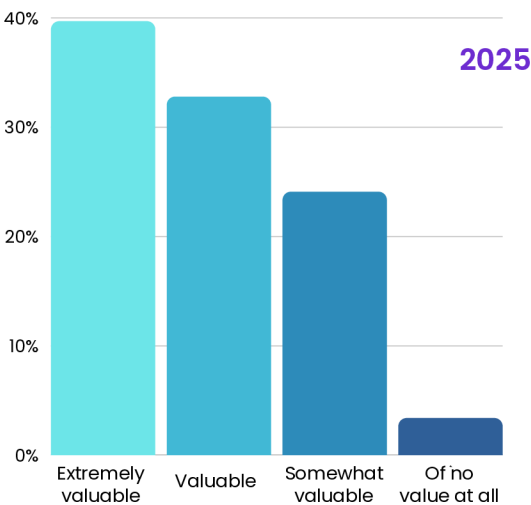
# 7. What is the value of data?

How valuable do you find the content usage and/or student engagement analytics provided by your suppliers?

- Extremely valuable – 39.7%
- Valuable – 32.8%
- Somewhat valuable – 24.1%
- Of no value at all – 3.4%

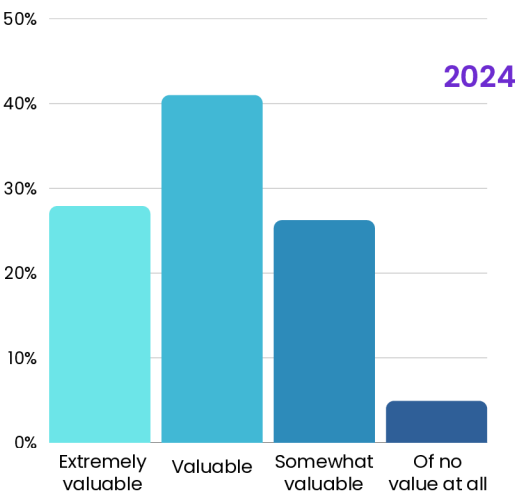
Conclusion:

Over two-thirds of respondents found data analytics provided by suppliers extremely valuable or valuable.



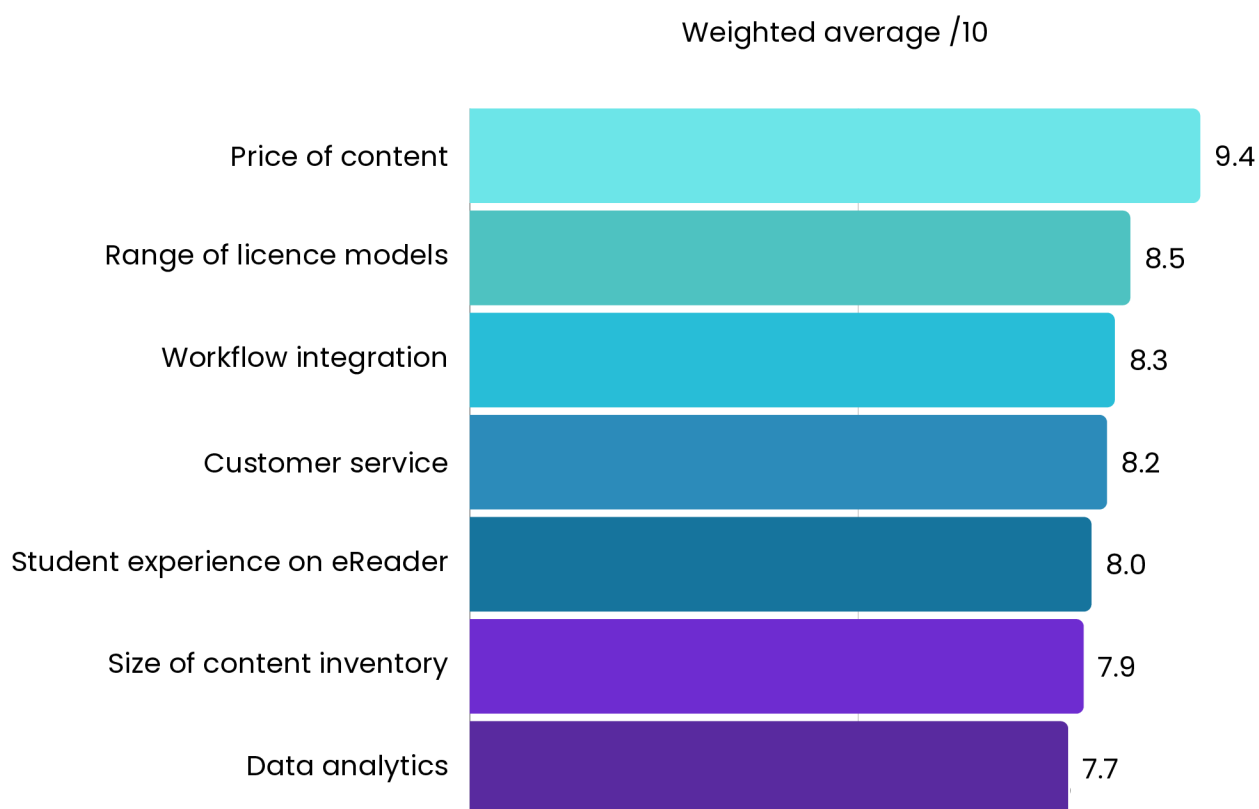
More respondents in 2025 (+11.8%) found data analytics ‘extremely valuable’, compared with our survey results from 2024.

- Extremely valuable – 27.9%
- Valuable – 41%
- Somewhat valuable – 26.2%
- Of no value at all – 4.9%



## 8. What is important when selecting a library supplier?

When selecting a library supplier, how important are the following in your decision-making? (score each out of 10, 0 = not important and 10 = very important):



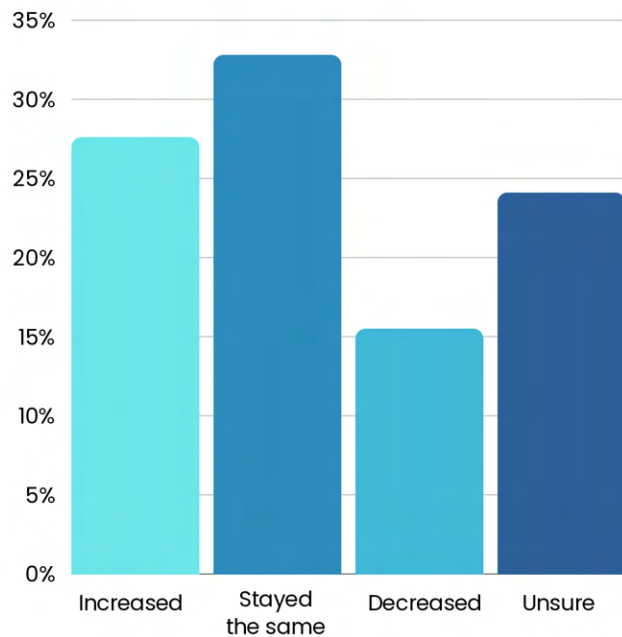
### Conclusion:

Price of content was the most important factor when selecting a library supplier, followed by the range of licence models and workflow integration.

## 9. How are students engaging with library resources?

In the last 12 months, has student engagement with your library resources:

- Increased – 27.6%
- Stayed the same – 32.8%
- Decreased – 15.5%
- Unsure – 24.1%



### Conclusion:

Over a quarter of respondents said student engagement with library resources had increased.



## 9. How are students engaging with library resources?

We asked respondents to share an example of how they had encouraged student engagement with library resources in their institution.

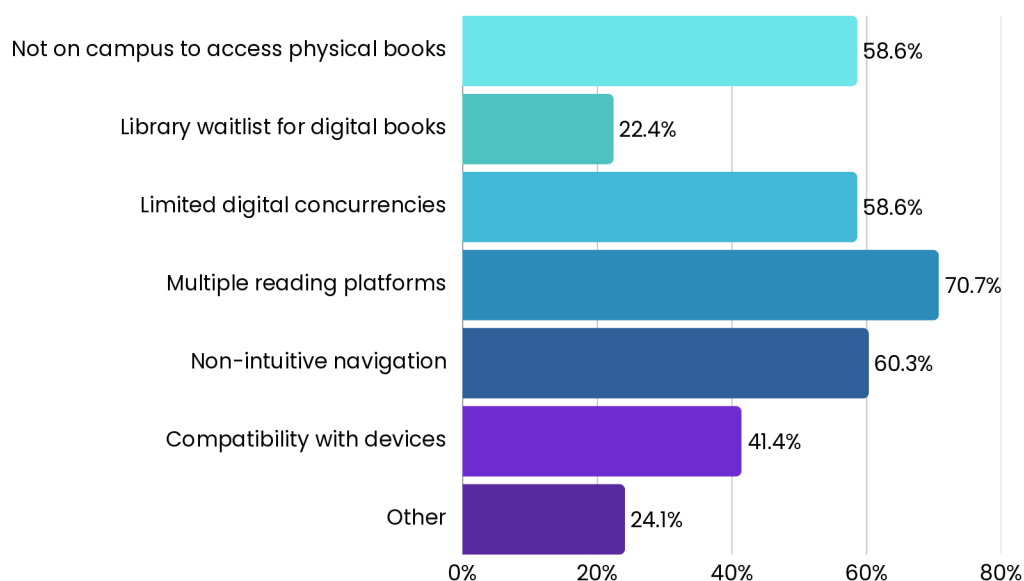
Some common strategies were:

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Social media campaigns            | Email campaigns                             |
| Library pop-up events or drop-ins | Working closely with academics              |
| Embedded reading lists            | 1:1 tutorials                               |
| Subject/video guides              | In-curriculum teaching                      |
| Optional workshops                | Improving library systems/discovery service |
| Social events and festivals       | Kortext student ambassadors                 |



## 10. What are the main barriers to access?

What barriers do your students currently face when accessing library resources?  
Select all that apply:



In 2024, 27.9% of respondents identified 'not on campus to access physical books' as a barrier to access compared to 58.6% in 2025. This significant difference (+30.7%) suggests students are coming on to campus less frequently.

The responses given for 'Other' can be grouped into the following themes:

Financial constraints and the rising costs of e-resources

Students facing technical and/or authentication issues

Accessibility (e.g. tools not being consistent for all digital resources)

Students' information literacy skills and/or awareness of resources

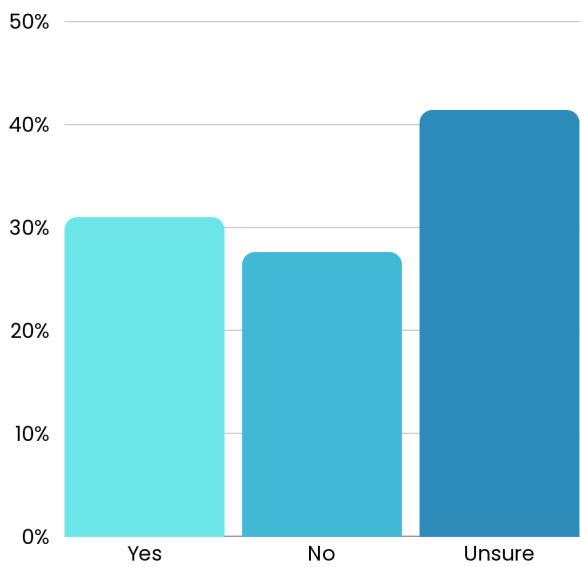
# 11. What is the outlook for library funding?

Do you think your library will be adequately funded to meet student needs for the next academic year?

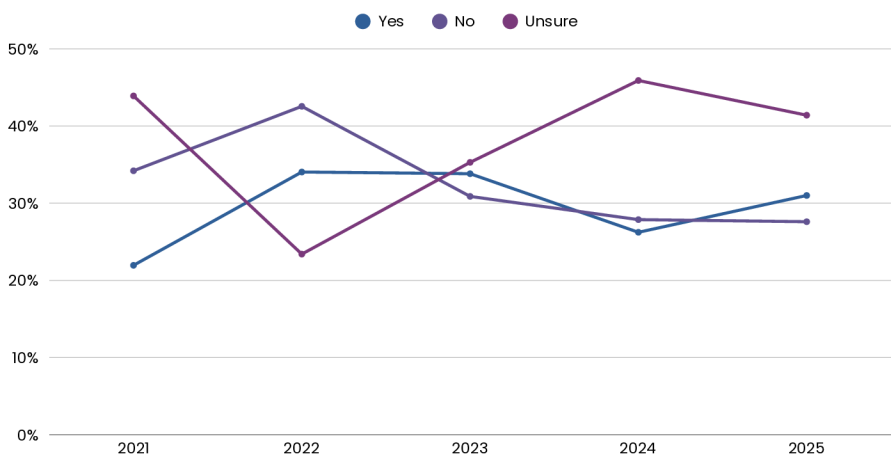
- Yes – 31%
- No – 27.6%
- Unsure – 41.4%

Conclusion:

Just under a third of respondents thought their library would be adequately funded next academic year.

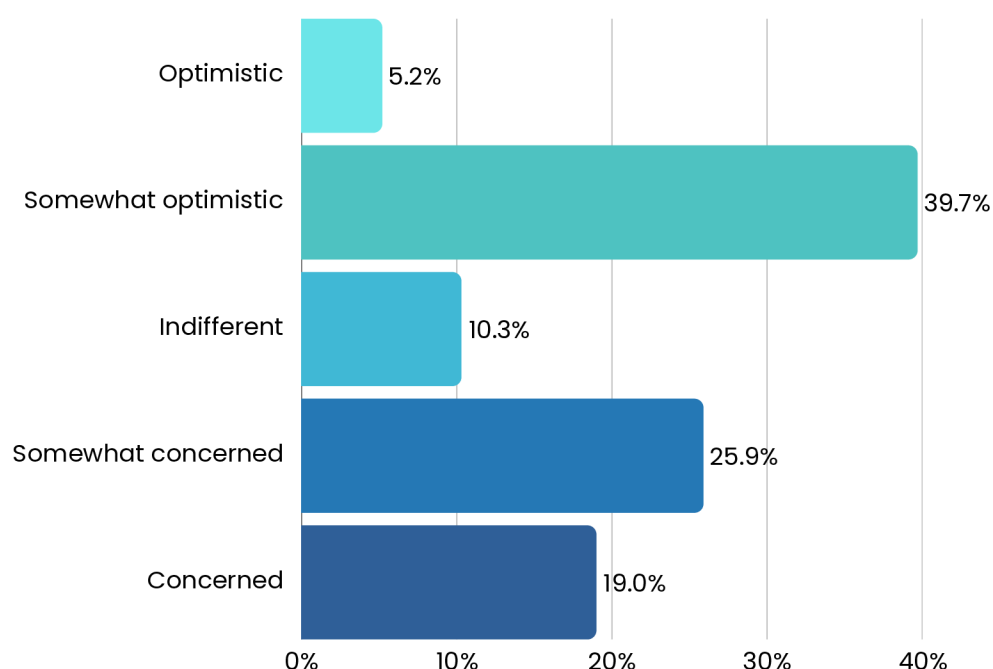


Mapping this response against the previous four years of our survey, it shows a continuing uncertainty about funding despite some levelling off from 2024.



## 12. What is the impact of generative AI?

According to the [HEPI/Kortext Student Generative AI Survey 2025](#), 92% of HE students are using generative AI tools. How do you feel about generative AI tools and their potential to impact learning and teaching?



Compared with 2024, fewer respondents were optimistic (14% in 2024), whereas more respondents were concerned (8.8% in 2024) about generative AI.

We asked respondents to share their thoughts about generative AI tools and their potential to impact learning and teaching.

Responses were equally divided between the positive and negative aspects of AI. We've included a selection of these on the following pages.

## 12. What is the impact of generative AI?

Many respondents said that AI tools offered time-saving benefits:

**'They can really help with saving time, opening up ideas, helping you start.'**

While some saw opportunities to streamline workflows:

**'The potential for radically altering the way we work is very exciting.'**

Some respondents felt AI tools could help make library resources more discoverable:

**'I think RAG AI tools within library online resources can help discover relevant content more easily.'**

However, respondents stressed the need for transparency:

**'There is much they [AI tools] can do that is of benefit, so long as their use is transparent and not hidden or masked.'**

While some respondents saw benefits around accessibility and inclusion, there were also concerns about equity of access:

**'It can level the playing field for those who struggle with traditional educational strategies and learning.'**

**'I see a very real risk that this will increase inequity between students around those who can afford to subscribe to certain tools and those who cannot.'**



## 12. What is the impact of generative AI?

Many respondents were worried about the erosion of academic integrity:

**‘Students no longer need to take notes or complete their assignments themselves, so how can we assess that they actually understand? Exams need to change to oral/viva type exams and practical demonstrations. AI needs to be used a tool but not as a replacement for education.’**

While some were concerned about the environmental impact of AI:

**‘I’m also deeply concerned about the environmental impact and the lack of coverage that this aspect is receiving.’**

And fears that AI may have a negative impact on library services and resources:

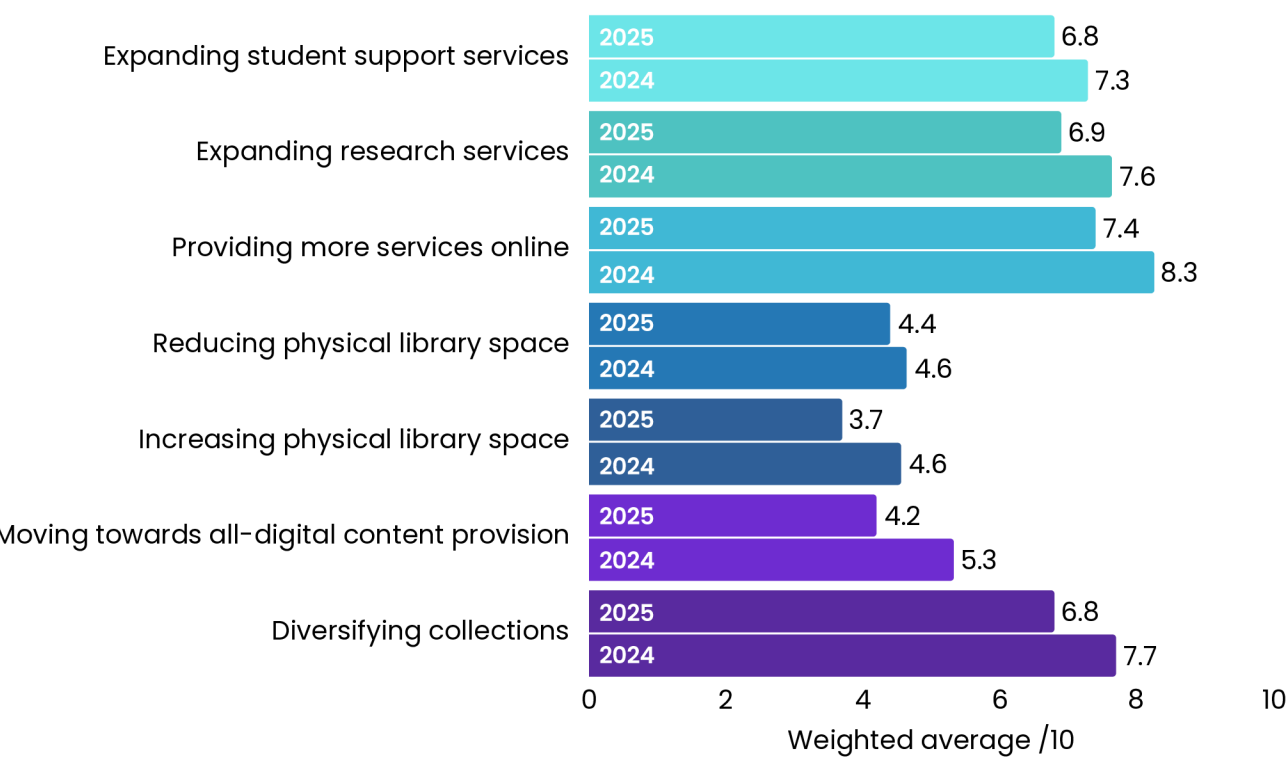
**‘Concerned that some students are starting to use AI to take short cuts in their study and research, either bypassing the library altogether or engaging less with source materials due to summarising ability of AI tools ... We suspect that this may be contributing to our fall in usage figures for subscribed resources although we have no evidence to support this.’**

Finally, some respondents felt that fast-moving developments left institutions, and their staff, struggling to keep up:

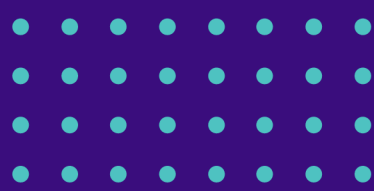
**‘I don’t feel like HEIs are adequately equipped/have capacity to investigate misuse of AI, in addition to training up staff to recognise gen AI over student work.’**

# 13. How will the academic library evolve?

Looking ahead, how do you see your library evolving in the next 10 years in terms of (score each out of 10, 0 = no change and 10 = significant change):



In the chart above we have added data from our 2024 survey for comparison. For all categories, respondents were less certain about their library’s evolution.



# 13. How will the academic library evolve?

We invited our respondents to elaborate on their answers to this question.

Their responses centred around six common themes.

## 1. The impact of funding issues in HE:

**'Library budgets aren't a priority when institutional budgets are under pressure across the HE sector and that isn't going to change anytime soon.'**

## 2. The reduction of physical library space:

**'We already have plans in place to sacrifice library space to accommodate other teams in the university, to save costs.'**

## 3. The significance of physical library space:

**'...from UX work and also speaking with students they still place a value on the physical space of the Library. There is a place for them to work and study which is appreciated, it provides a space that is perhaps away from daily life where there is a chance to focus.'**





# 13. How will the academic library evolve?

## 4. An increase in digital content:

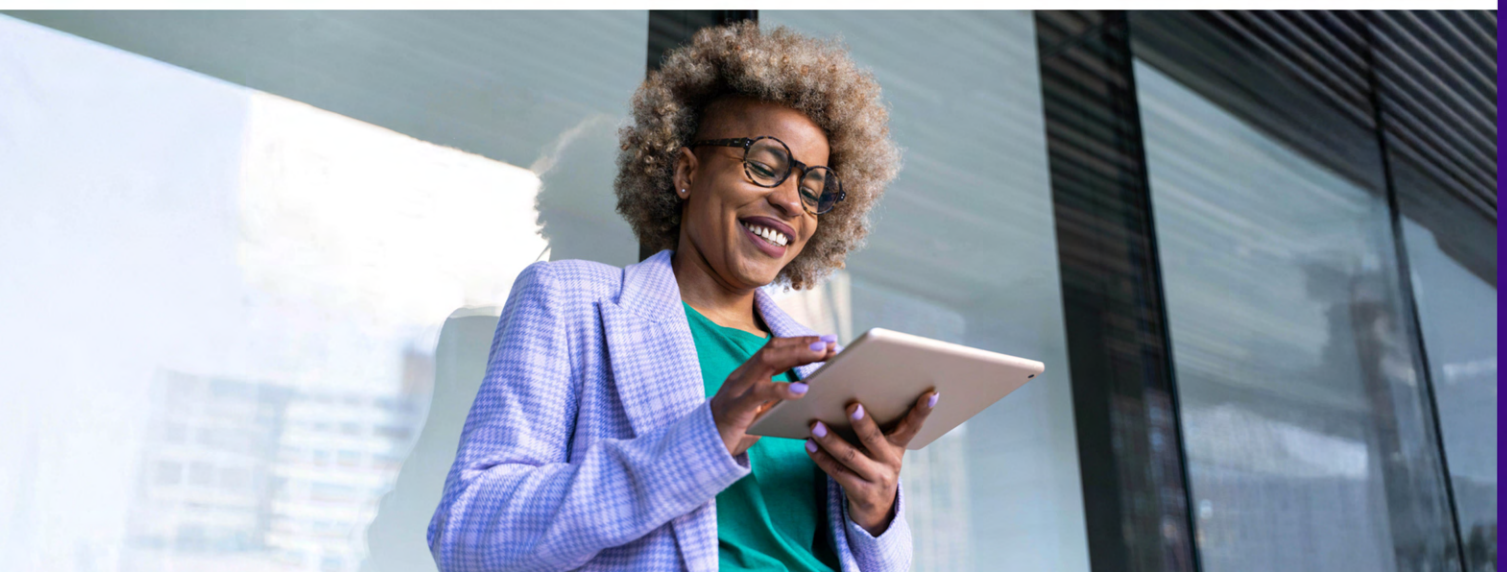
'There has been a marked decline in the use of print materials, so we will probably be looking at reducing current and future print stock and investing more in new database and eBook providers, linking to OA and OER as well.'

## 5. A balance between print and digital content:

'We already provide a large amount online but we could never be 100% digital because about 20-30% of what staff and students need just isn't available to buy online. Equally, some online resources are simply too expensive for our budget and this year we have had to revert to print purchasing for some items so that we can then scan 1 chapter.'

## 6. The importance of diversifying collections:

'EDI is important and we are continuing to diversify our collections to reflect the wider world and the experiences of diverse people within the UK, e.g. Black British experience.'



# Conclusion

Now in its fifth year, our survey provides a snapshot of how current conditions are impacting on academic libraries and those who work in them.

The results show that many libraries are experiencing financial constraints, spending less on digital content in the last 12 months.

Despite this, respondents identified 'an increase in digital content' as a key trend when asked how the academic library will evolve over the next 10 years.

Indeed, the need for online resources is growing as our findings show students are less likely to be on campus to access library materials.

The solution to bridging this gap may lie in open content (OA and/or OERs).

Our survey demonstrated a continuing upward trend, with the integration of open content into reading lists to supplement core paid-for resources.

In this mix of shrinking budgets and evolving student needs, generative AI continues to be a disruptor that cannot be ignored.

This year, our respondents were more concerned, and less optimistic, about the impact of generative AI on learning and teaching.

We value every response we received. Thank you for helping us to understand your needs better and support you more effectively. We're listening.

Find out more  
about Kortext

[www.kortext.com](http://www.kortext.com)