Going Virtual: Is it a reality?

Experiences and ways forward in providing library services for health service managers in the UK

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Presentation

- Background to Health Services Management Centre (HSMC)
- Consider the need to develop access to library and information services virtually
- Evaluation of how one user group uses the HSMC library web pages
- Lessons and ways forward

Background

- HSMC leading Centre for health management education and research in the UK

- Department within School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham

- Self Financing

- Only Department to have an independently financed library service

Reasons for developing the web pages

- Many academic staff work on consultancy / development projects away from HSMC

- Many are based away from Birmingham and work mainly from home

- Most postgraduate students are part time and only come to HSMC once a week

Reasons for developing the web pages

- HSMC also has a contract to provide educational support for the national NHS Management Training Scheme (MTS) students
- MTS students registered with HSMC for 2 years, but rarely at HSMC

HSMC Library Web Pages

- Links to E Journals
- Web-enabled catalogue
- "Hot" topics
- Full text health policy documents
- Databases
- web-enabled education and training support
- http://www.bham.ac.uk/hsmc/library

Evaluation on how the web pages are being used

- Questionnaire survey to second year NHS MTS students (62)
  - Rarely at HSMC, spread across the UK
  - Mostly young (majority are recent graduates)
 - Senior NHS Managers of the future

Evaluation - Questionnaire

- Do they use the web site
- Reasons for doing so
- How successful do they feel they are in finding the information they need
- Barriers
- Suggestions for improvement
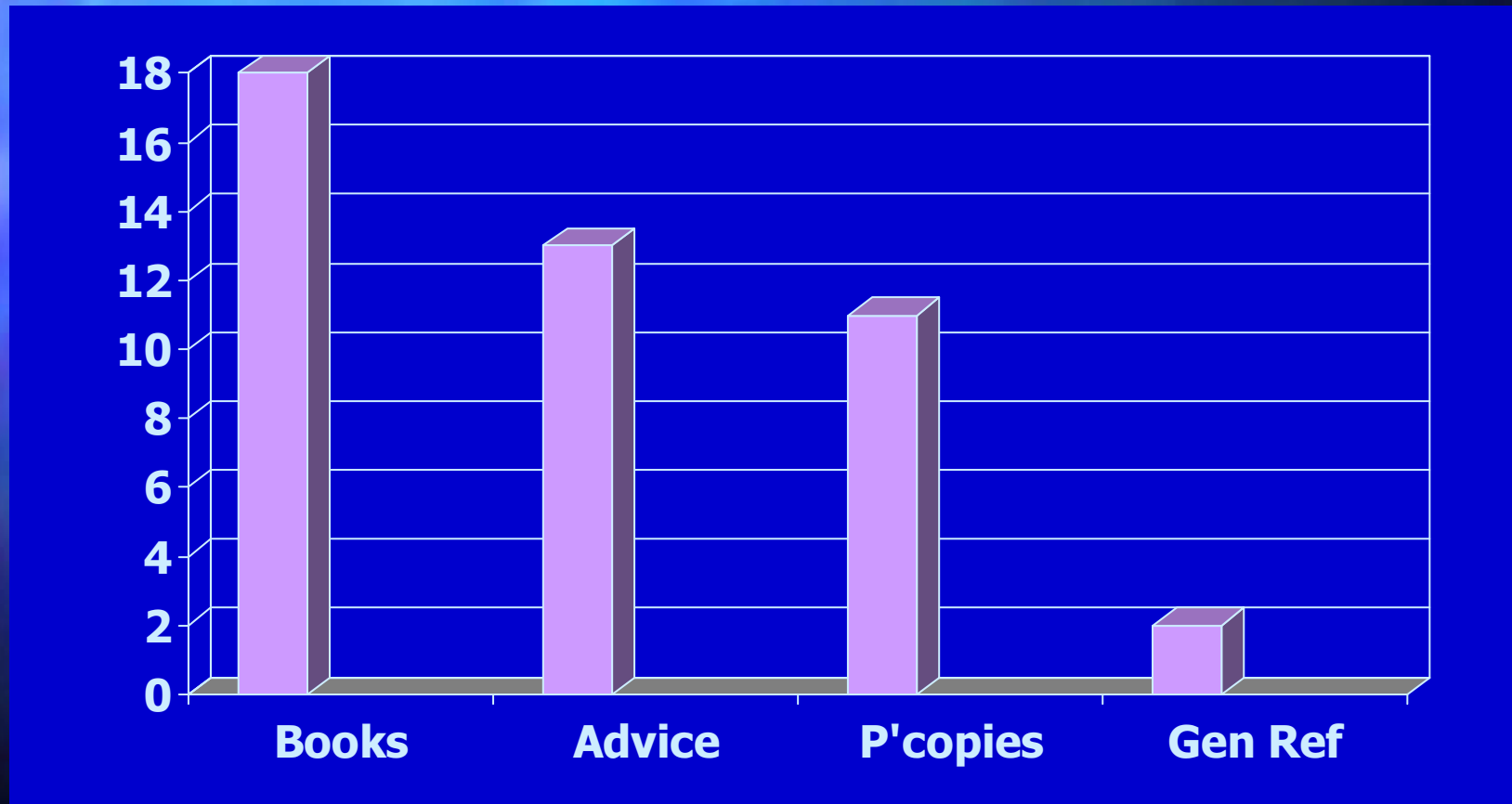- A future role for "traditional" services

Evaluation - survey findings

- 36 questionnaires returned (58%) response rate
- 33 web users
- majority use the HSMC library web pages once or twice a week
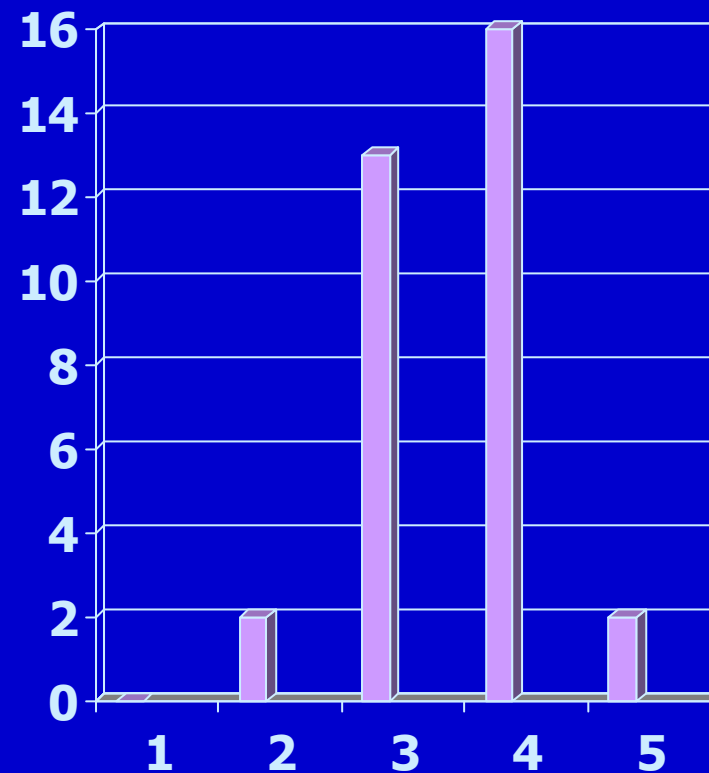
Reasons for Using the Web
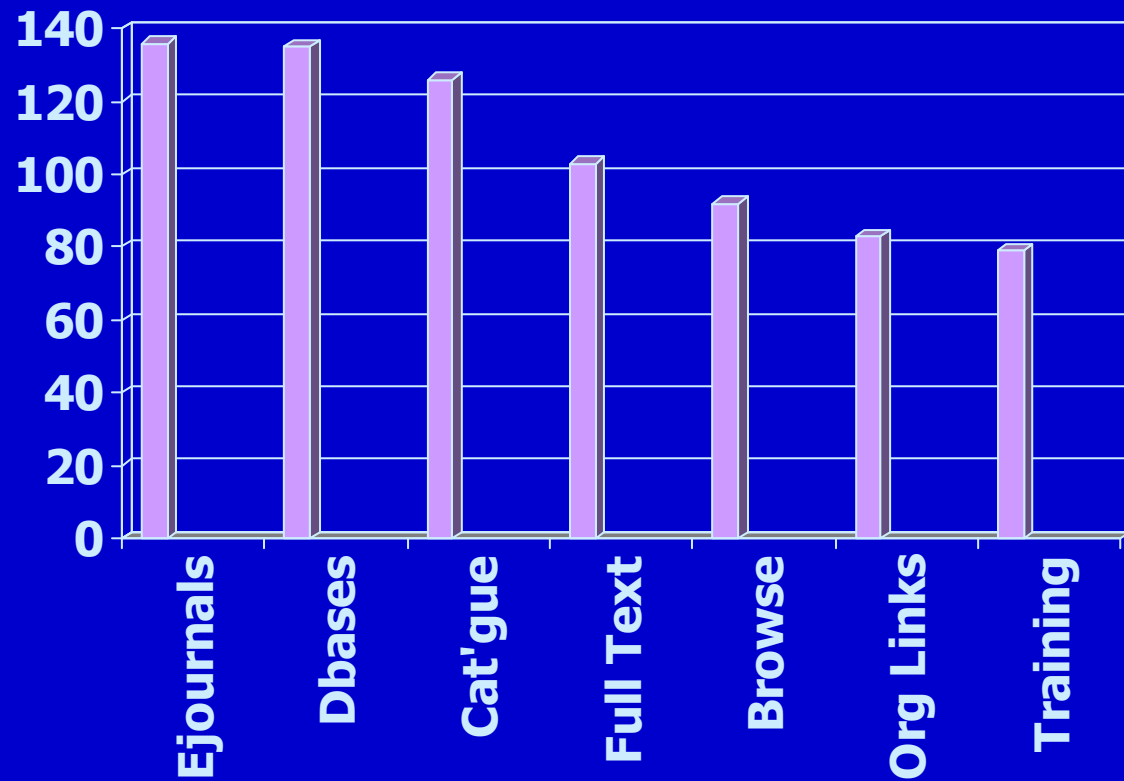
Reasons why 31 respondents contact library staff

Perceived Success Levels

- Rankings:
- 1 - 5 (1 being never successful, 5 being always successful)

Barriers

- Not enough access to full text electronic journals
- Not sure which are the best sources
- Lack of ability in developing search strategies
- Confusion over passwords

Suggestions for improvement

- More full text information
- Access to reading lists
- Access to other libraries catalogues
- Reserve / recall HSMC stock on line
- More filtered information - "hot" topics
- Better search engine
- Totally user friendly!!

Need for traditional services AND staff!

- Only 5 felt total reliance on electronic resources was the way forward
- All respondents felt there was a future role for staff
  - Keeping web sites up to date
  - Designing a user friendly interface
  - Help & advice on searching
  - Sign posting to best resources

Need for traditional services AND staff!

– Marketing new resources / web updates

– Ongoing liaison role with users

– "You cannot replace the human help we all need"

– "The library team have an invaluable role as experts"

– "Conversations with librarians helps to ensure clarity of thinking and spark off ideas"

Conclusions

- Survey findings support key messages from literature
- Library users will increasingly use the internet BUT Library staff important as:
  - partners not just gatekeepers
  - Advisors
  - Proactive providers, rather than custodians of buildings and collections

Conclusions

- Flexible providers of hybrid services to meet the differing needs of users, even within the same user group

- GOING TOTALLY VIRTUAL NOT A REALITY, REMAINING HYBRID IS!