

Library Borrower Survey

February 2007

1. Background

- 1.1. There has been no survey of borrower attitudes to loan limits for a number of years. This situation, combined with some expressions of dissatisfaction with these limits arising from responses to QUB Graduating Student Surveys, prompted the Library to issue a Library Borrower questionnaire.
- 1.2. The purpose of the survey was to establish, for each category of borrower, the levels of satisfaction with the Library's current loan periods, loan limits and renewal limits. (Associate borrowers were not included in this survey).
- 1.3. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The survey, in the form of a web-based questionnaire, was emailed to all staff, and for undergraduate and postgraduate students a web link to the questionnaire was made available on the Queen's Online Student home page Teaching Assistants and Recognised Teachers were emailed or contacted by post.
- 2.3 The survey was accessible for just over 3 weeks, from 19th January to 7th February 2007.

3. Respondents

- 3.1 A total of 683 responses were received. The table below lists the number of responses for each category of borrower, together with the percentage of the total responses for all categories.

Table 1

Category of Respondent	Number of Respondents	% Respondents
Staff	256	37.4
Undergraduate	328	48
PG Research	41	6
PG Taught	43	6.3
Teaching Assistants and Recognised Teachers	15	2.1
TOTAL	683	100

3.2 Responses were received from all 21 Schools with a large number of responses from Medicine and Dentistry, History and Anthropology, Law, and Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology. There were also respondents from 12 other Units including 3 Institutes, one Centre and 8 Admin/Support areas.

4. Responses

The paragraphs below summarise the responses received to each of the 3 questions.

5. Number of items available for loan at any one time

5.1 Respondents' levels of satisfaction with the current loan limits are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2

Borrower Category	Too Few	About Right	Too Many
Staff	22	228	6
Undergraduate	67	257	4
PG Research	6	35	0
PG Taught	17	26	0
Teaching Assistants and Recognised Teachers	6	9	0
Total	118	555	10
% Response	17.28	81.26	1.46

See also Appendix 2 for accompanying pie chart

5.2 Typical comments

Staff

The present level seems very generous, certainly for staff member

For staff it should be unlimited

I teach 3 courses in a semester and this requires a lot of preparation. The 25 book limit is simply too low to meet my needs especially when I am also taking out books for research purposes

... if some people take out a large number of book there will be fewer interesting books for others to browse and hence to borrow

Undergrad

I think around exam time and when working on assignments, it would be useful to be able to borrow a few more books

Depending on the subject being studied, such as english or history, many more books are needed for reference

Too many would just be depriving others of the opportunity of obtaining books

Teaching Assistants & Recognised Teachers

Helps me to discipline my reading – I can't read 10 books at once

5.3 **Summary**

As Table 2 indicates, 81% of respondents felt that the current limit on the number of items which may be borrowed at any one time is satisfactory. The responses to this question revealed the highest level of satisfaction of the three questions posed; those who would prefer the current limit to be increased were mostly undergraduates, taught postgraduates, or teaching assistants. It is clear from the comments to this question that there is a concern that increased number of loans would inevitably result in fewer available books and an increased number of recalls.

6. **Loan Periods**

6.1 Respondents' levels of satisfaction with the current loan period are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3

Borrower Category	Too Short	About Right	Too Long
Staff	46	197	13
Undergraduate	147	167	14
PG Research	8	32	1
PG Taught	23	19	0
Teaching Assistants and Recognised Teachers	10	5	0
Total	234	420	28
% Response	34.31	61.58	4.11

See also Appendix 3 for accompanying pie chart

6.2 Typical comments

Staff

Too short for books from the Medical Library – why are these not available for the same period as the Main Library

It is especially annoying to have to return a book nobody else is interested in. If you are doing a research project, you can easily need a book for reference over the whole year, if not longer

I would like to be able to keep longer if not requested by other people

More than adequate, perhaps too long depending on demand for books

Books should stay available in the Library, not forgotten in offices

Undergrad

Overnight loans at Seamus Heaney, whilst understandable due to demand, are too short

Short loans are too short

As a part-time student overnight loans are absolutely useless

I understand you need to keep the books in regular circulation

Postgrad Taught

Overnight loans are totally unworkable for postgrad students

6.3 Summary

The majority of responses indicate that there is an overall satisfaction with the current loan periods, though the level of satisfaction is considerably lower than that for the number of books which may be

borrowed. As with the previous responses, undergraduates and taught PGs were the categories least satisfied with the current limits. A great deal of frustration with the Seamus Heaney loan periods, particularly the 24 hour period, was expressed; part-time students were particularly unhappy with short loan periods. A number of staff and research postgrads felt loan periods were inadequate for their research activities.

7. Renewal Limits

7.1 Respondents' levels of satisfaction with current renew of limits are reflected in Table 4.

Table 4

Borrower Category	Too low	About Right	Too High
Staff	80	166	10
Undergraduate	115	199	14
PG Research	20	19	2
PG Taught	15	25	2
Teaching Assistants and Recognised Teachers	7	8	0
Total	237	417	28
% Response	34.75	61.14	4.11

See also Appendix 4 for accompanying pie chart

7.2 Typical comments

Staff

Many of the books borrowed by research students and staff are highly specialized. One should be able to renew these and return only when requested by another

I returned a book after the 3rd renewal and tried to loan it again. The librarian told me I could not, but if there was another copy on the shelf I could take it – ridiculous

I actually didn't know there was a limit until I read this question – but it's fine. It stops readers from hogging books

Only fair to have books back on shelf for others and stops people holding onto books for long periods of time when not using

Undergrad

If there is still a copy of the book in the library it would be reasonable to allow borrowers to keep renewing the copy they have on loan

There shouldn't be a limit. If a book is needed by another student they have the reserve option

I would like to renew a book after 3 times by bringing it to the Issue Desk and taking it out again immediately, not by leaving it in the library to be re-shelved and finding it again the next day

Teaching Assistants & Recognised Teachers

If no one else is waiting for the book, it makes sense to renew it as often as needed

7.3 Summary

Although there was a clear majority in favour of the existing renewal limits, of the three questions included in the survey, this one reflected the lowest satisfaction rates. It also provoked the largest number of comments, which were mostly in the form of complaints about having to renew, and eventually return, unrequested items. As might be expected, staff and research postgraduates were particularly irritated by this ruling.

8. Comments on Library services and resources as a whole

A selection of comments is listed below under the most frequently occurring topics. The comments selected are in proportion to the number of satisfied and dissatisfied responses received.

8.1 Inter-library loans

8.1.1 Online request forms

Inter-library loans system desperately needs streamlining. Filling out cards and taking them to the Library is time-wasting. Convenient online system must be introduced

The form filling is tedious

The current system for ordering inter-library loans is inconvenient. ...the existing form for ECIT doesn't allow pasting information and entering email address... the process (is) inefficient and prone to errors since Library staff need to re-enter the data

It would be extremely useful to be able to request photocopies and ILLs online

8.1.2 Speed of supply

The inter-library loans process is too slow and the time for getting books too long

Inter-library loans take too long to receive

8.2 Library staff

Staff

I am very happy with the helpful and courteous service

I am a new member of staff and have found the Library staff extremely helpful

Postgrad Taught

One has the impression that staff are 'on your side', and they are helpful and courteous

Fantastic staff

...I have always found the Library staff very helpful and pleasant especially at Biomed and Med libraries

Undergrad

You are all great people and work very hard

The Science Library is a wonderful Library with eternally helpful staff. It needs to be resourced to the hilt

I find the Library to be a friendly atmosphere at the Main site and helpful

As a regular user of about 4 different libraries across the university, I find staff very helpful

I think the Library staff are extremely unhelpful, not only do they take an uninterested approach but they are also very rude.

Staff in the Heaney are not very helpful

I have felt staff in the Library to be unhelpful and short on occasions

8.3 Library services

Staff

The Library provides an excellent service

Thanks for a good and developing service

I could say I want more books, longer loan periods etc but that might encourage my existing bad habits. I think the existing practices are balanced and appropriate

The Library is focuses on the needs of students to the detriment of staff

The Library does not offer a good service at all. It is an overly bureaucratic, unhelpful, and unwelcoming part of QUB which seems more concerned with fining staff and retaining books than with facilitating research and offering a service

Postgrad Taught

First class service

Extremely happy with the service provided

Undergrad

I have found the user experience generally good

8.4 Availability of books

Staff

I would like to see a more active acquisitions policy for instance why don't we automatically get new books from major publishers in areas where QUB staff are teaching and researching. I would also like to see the budget for books and journals brought into line with other Russell Group institutions

Too few resources for some modules – difficult to get books/offprints at essay and exam time

...QCat gives reference numbers to find the books but when you get to the L the books are not there even though QCat said they were available in the Library

Many times the books I am looking for are available on QCat, but not in its (sic) place in the Main Library

Postgrad Research

I am concerned about the assumption...that only book which are directly related to a single module and are of direct interest to students may be recommended for the Library

Postgrad Taught

As a student I hated the way that UU students would use their friends to take out books on a QUB card and deny other QUB students the chance to use them

Undergrad

The Library doesn't carry sufficient numbers of copies of many texts on module reading lists – this is a problem I have experienced from 1st to 3rd year

Often it was left to lecturers to bring in their own copies of the texts to lend to students

The number of books for each module (especially for English) is insufficient for the number of people doing the module

Books which are supposed to be available can at times be impossible to find

I am concerned that some books which are catalogued have proven impossible to find, with the added worry that, after a fruitless search, staff have no idea what happened to them

8.5 Availability of journals

Staff

Online access to a wide range of electronic journals is excellent

...it is important to subscribe to more journals as it is difficult and time-consuming (and often impossible) to find a free publication elsewhere on the internet if QUB does not offer free downloads

Subscriptions to more electronic journals

One policy I dislike: new journals only subscribed to if a journal deleted

Postgrad Taught

I suppose the only thing which could be substantially improved is the journal subscriptions

My problem is the limited access to certain journals especially online

I come from 2 Russell Group universities and the standard of electronic journal access at QUB is poor compared to both of them

Better access to ejournals the Library doesn't carry

8.6 Opening hours

Staff

The fact there barely is (sic) any libraries open during weekends is baffling

Weekend opening hours are inadequate, as are vacation hours. 9 – 5 would be much more useful on Saturdays

Longer opening hours particularly at weekends would be welcome

The Seamus Heaney library is open throughout the night during the week which is excellent. However it is not advertised well...it would be great if this stretched to weekends

Undergrad

Library opening hours are inadequate. The Seamus Heaney Library should only close on Christmas Day. The Main Library should be open 7 days a week at least until 22.00

Opening hours at weekends could be extended

8.7 Email alerts

Staff

When you receive an email to warn you books are overdue, it would be better if you received the email a week before and not on the actual day

It would be good to have a reminder of books about to be overdue –say with a week to go, to give ample opportunity to renew or return

Reminders to return items on loan are sent to the borrower when these are already due, thus making unavoidable the fine

I like the reminder that a due date is coming up which is very helpful

I would really appreciate it if a message could be sent out before the Christmas, Easter and summer holidays notifying of the due date for book returns on the re-opening of the Library

Postgrad Research

Email alerts are very helpful

8.8 Recalls

Staff

I think the recall period when you have just taken a book out is too short and would prefer to keep the book for at least 2 weeks from taking it out

There is no need for a book to be recalled from a borrower early if it has been reserved. Reserved should mean when a book is returned on its proper date (nor renewals allowed) then it is automatically kept for the reserver

The frustrating aspect of loaning a book is when you take it out for a loan period but then get a message to return it before the end of this period as someone else has requested it

Postgrad Taught

On several occasions I have loaned a book and then almost immediately I have received a request that another borrower wants the book. Surely there should be a minimum period before the book must be returned

Undergrad

(What do you dislike about the Library service) Getting a book out on loan only for it to be immediately recalled for another student

Although I am told I can have a book for 4 weeks, sometimes it is recalled within a week

8.9 Noise

Staff

...the study areas (SHL) need to be quieter, some people just sit and chat

I find that the study areas can get too noisy and students should be asked to leave. This is particularly bad in the SHL

Undergrad

Needs to be a tighter restriction on the level of noise in the quiet work areas of the Library esp. Seamus Heaney

Librarians talk much too loudly and gossip whilst people are trying to work. This even occurred at exam time and I was forced to use the old Library (sic) where I could get some peace.

I like the silence they try to maintain.

Teaching Assistants & Recognised Teachers

Heaney 24 hour opening for exams superb but noise levels were unacceptable. Monitoring needed at peak times

There is too much talking in the Library and when I tell people to be quiet it doesn't go down well. Could it be policed sometimes?

8.10 Other areas of concern

Staff

I prefer to have books stamped with the due back date

The catalogue is appalling especially the author index

*The wireless internet system is set up only to work with PC laptops.
Quire a lot of students actually use Macs*

Site of Medical Library...is in the wrong place – inaccessible to the majority of users

Fines imposed on loans from Heaney are much too high

Undergrad

I think the strictness of overnight loans on DVDs and videos could be loosened. It takes more than a day to study a film.

Book drop-off at the front door of the Library would be helpful

There should be a permanent shelving rack in the photocopying rooms for books to be re-shelved

There should be higher penalties for failing to return a book when a reservation has been placed

I would like to be able to return books to any QUB library

Teaching Assistants & Recognised Teachers

I think that journals should be ordered on the shelves by title

9. Conclusions

Despite the fact that, as a percentage of the university population, responses to the Survey were very low, the total number of responses was unexpectedly high. The results of the Survey indicate that a clear majority of respondents (68%) are satisfied with the borrowing arrangements under review. However, a number of regularly recurring comments reflect a serious concern with some aspects of these arrangements - staff renewal limits and undergraduate recalls in particular. The fact that a significant number of respondents made a point of commenting on the Library's services and resources as a whole, was encouraging and useful. It was also gratifying to receive so much positive feedback on Library staff performance, particularly when this was not an area included on the questionnaire, although there are also a number of negative comments in this area. Many of the criticisms relate to areas which will always be problematic and unresolvable, for example, insufficient copies of textbooks, limited number of journal titles, while other criticisms will be addressed either as part of the Library's strategic plans, for example, electronic ILL requesting, or with the opening of the new Library, for example, opening hours, stock located on a number of different sites. Other issues which become apparent from analysis of the comments include an unawareness on the part of a number of users of many of the

services offered by the Library, for example online renewals, staff alerts, printed and online guides, and a widespread unfamiliarity with the Library's web pages.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 Review the current procedures and limits for staff and research postgraduate renewals. *[Group currently reviewing all loan limits, including those applying to renewals]*
- 10.2 Prioritise with systems the provision of electronic inter-library loan request forms. *[In hand]*
- 10.3 Ensure that all material reported missing is checked again within 24 hours and at regular intervals. An inter-library loan should be offered with 7 days if the item is still unavailable. *[Issue Desk staff will ensure procedures are conveyed to all users who report missing items. Leaflet outlining these procedures in preparation]*
- 10.4 Investigate with systems the possibility of emailing borrowers the return dates for post-holiday closure periods. *[Under discussion with Library Systems]*
- 10.5 Review undergraduate recall procedures. *[Loan limits review group to look at current recall procedures]*
- 10.6 Improve and increase supervision of study areas. *[Branch Librarians will address local situation]*
- 10.7 Make Library staff aware of the level of dissatisfaction expressed by a small but significant number of the Survey respondents. Consider further 'customer care' awareness training. *[Service orientation seminars scheduled for staff. Branch Librarians to act on negative comments as appropriate]*
- 10.8 Consider the possibility of online requesting of shelf material. *[Issues relating to shelf material to be considered as part of implementation of online inter-Library Loan requesting in advance of move to New Library]*
- 10.9 Conduct, at 5 (?) yearly intervals, similar surveys, focused on particular areas of service, or particular categories of user. *[Agreed]*
- 10.10 Disseminate future surveys to postgraduate students via *all-postgraduate student's* email. *[Noted]*
- 10.11 Rerun the Borrower Survey for Teaching Assistants and Recognised Teachers when accurate addresses for those categories of reader become available. *[Agreed]*
- 10.12 Publicise the results of this survey and the recommendations. *[Agreed]*

S Landy
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Library Borrower Survey 2007

1. School/Department

2. User Category

- Staff
- Teaching Assistants
- Recognised Teachers
- PG Research
- PG Taught
- Undergraduate

3. In your opinion, is the number of items you can have on loan from the Library at any one time

- Too Few
- About Right
- Too Many

3a. Comments:

4. Do you consider the Library loan periods

- Too Short
- About Right
- Too many

4a. Comments:

5. What do you think of the limit on the number of times (3) you may renew a book?

- Too Few
- About Right
- Too Many

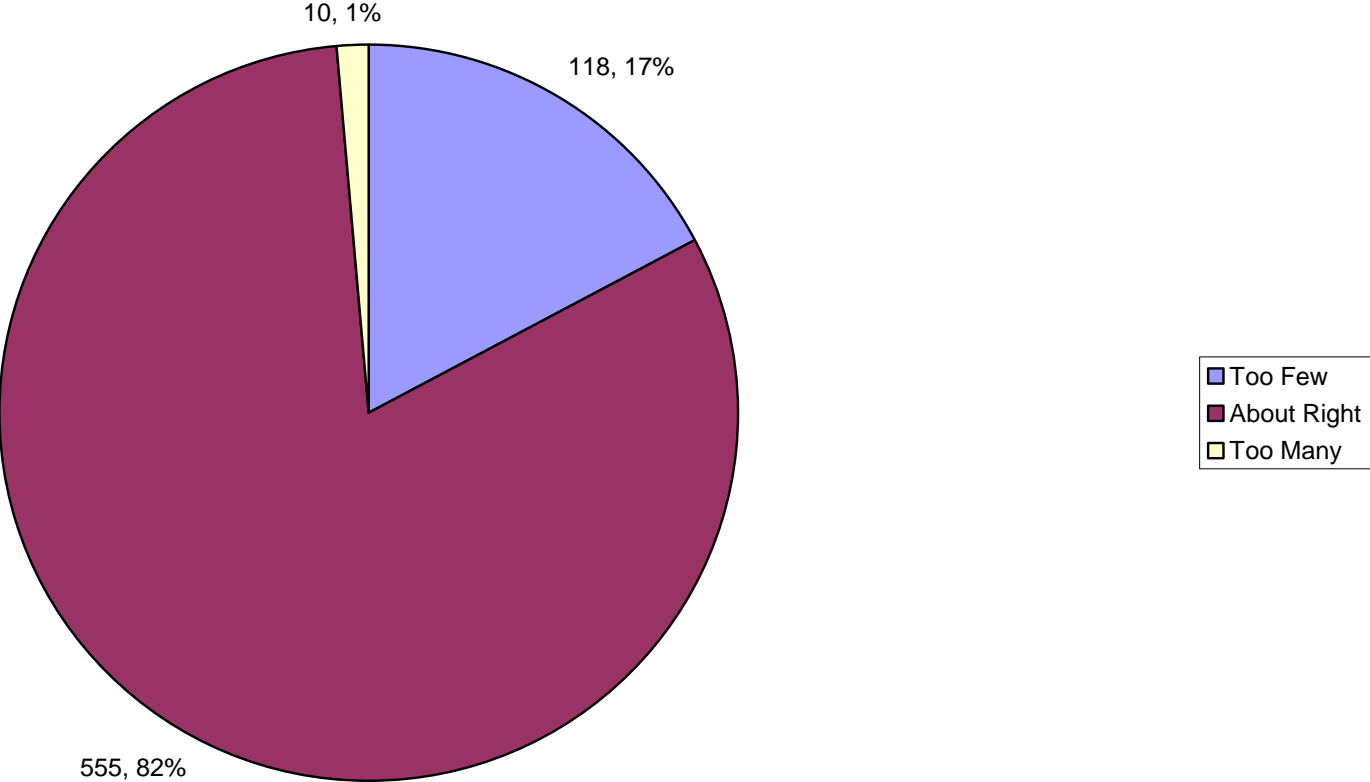
5a. Comments:

6. Please add any other comments you would like to make about the Library in general, for example, what you particularly like or dislike about our services, or what could be done better or differently to improve your experience of the Library.

Comments:

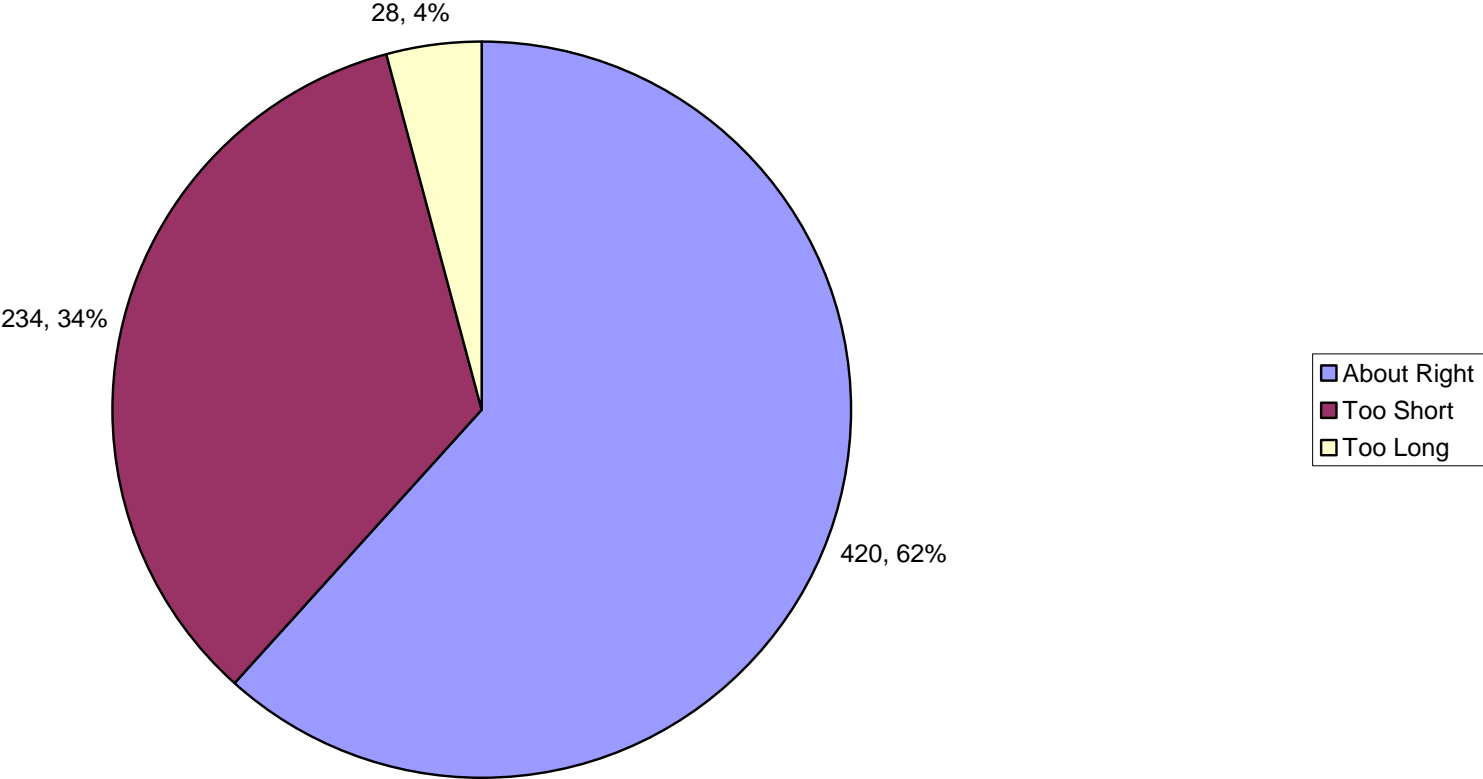
Appendix 2

Q3: Is the number of items you can have on loan from the library at any one time:



Appendix 3

Q4: Do you consider Library loan periods:



Appendix 4

Q5: Is the limit on the number of times (3) you may renew a book:

