

www.geo.lsa.umich.edu
User Survey Version 1.0
Results-
Potential Graduate Students
November 1, 2001

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Mailing, Mailing Size and Return Rate

On July 30, 2001, Version 1.0 surveys were mailed to 112 persons who had requested information regarding graduate-level admission to the Department for the fall term of 2001. Ten of these were returned as unforwardable. By November 1, fifteen responses had been received. These fifteen responses form the basis of this report.

Return Rate

The return rate for those who presumably received the survey is just below fourteen percent. While this represents a small N for statistical purposes, as a percentage it is considerably above the return rate for blind surveys on average. At the outset, it was determined that a ten percent return rate would be considered a success.

Note:

Responses almost come to a halt with the beginning of classes. A practical close date for future surveys is the first week of September. A mailing date of July 1 might improve the return rate slightly.

Results: Personal Demographics

Purpose: Broadly define the respondents and the nature of their hardware and software.

Section: "About you"

Age: 61% are 23 or below. 85% are 25 and below. The oldest respondent was 47. 13 respondents answered the question.

Gender: male=7, female=6. 13 respondents answered the question.

First Language: English=14, non-English=1. 15 respondents answered the question.

Educational Level: Bachelor=12, Masters=2. 14 respondents answered the question.

Undergraduate Majors: Geology or Geoscience=7, Geophysical Sciences=1, Earth and Planetary Science=2, Environmental Studies=1, Biology=1, Environmental Engineering=1, English=1. 13 respondents answered the question. (1 double major)

Note:

The survey should be clarified in the area of undergraduate majors as opposed to field of study for masters. This group understood the question of major to apply only to the bachelor degree.

Results: Hardware Profile

Purpose: Broadly define the respondents and the nature of their hardware and software.

Section: "About your computer"

Connection speed: Ethernet=9, Cable Modem=2, 56K modem=7, Other (DSL)=1 15 respondents answered the question.

Operating system: Windows=15, Macintosh=2, Unix=1. 15 respondents answered the question.

Monitor Size: 15 inch and below=10, 17 to 19 inch=5, above 19 inch=1. 15 respondents answered the question.

Color Depth: 256 color=4, thousand=8, millions=3. 15 respondents answered the question.

Location: browse from work=9, browse from home=8, use library systems=4, browse from schools=11, browse from "internet cafe"=1. 15 respondents answered the question.

Browser: Explorer=12, Navigator=8, other=2 (1 AOL) , 15 respondents answered the question. Explorer users favored version 4 and 5, where Navigator users tended to use versions 3 and 4.

Note:

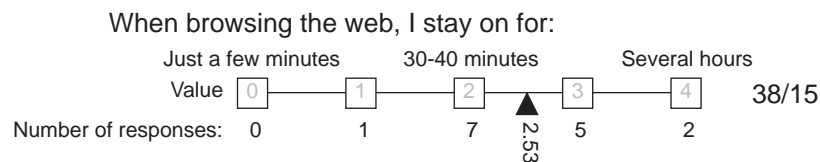
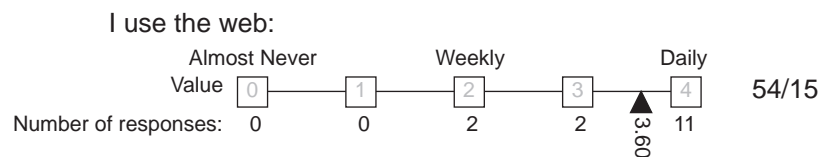
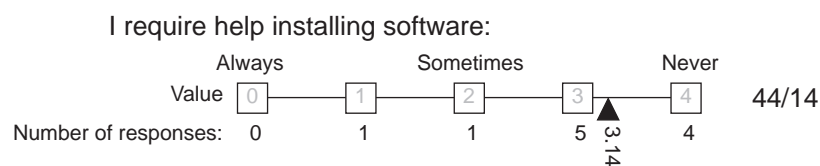
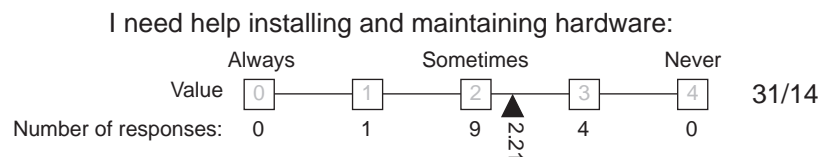
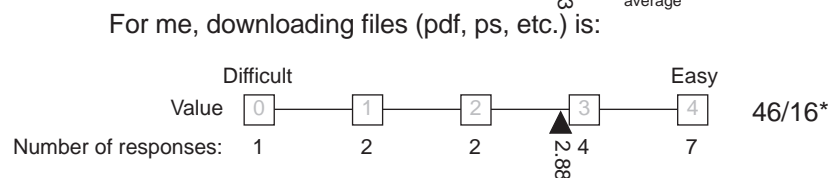
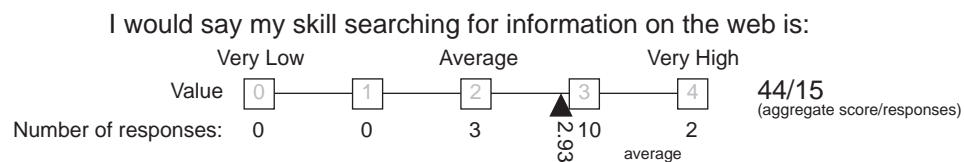
Connection question requires addition of "DSL" as well as "other". Browser question should add AOL and Mosaic. Research additional browsers for inclusion. Location question should be refined to elicit a single answer-"I **usually** browse from:"

Results: User Proficiency

Purpose: Determine the user's self-reported competence and comfort level with the web.

Section: "You and your computer"

Method: Each response is assigned a value from 0 to 4. The aggregate score is the sum of the value for each response multiplied by the number of responses. The average is the aggregate score divided by total responses.



* one respondent indicated a value for both internet and modem connections

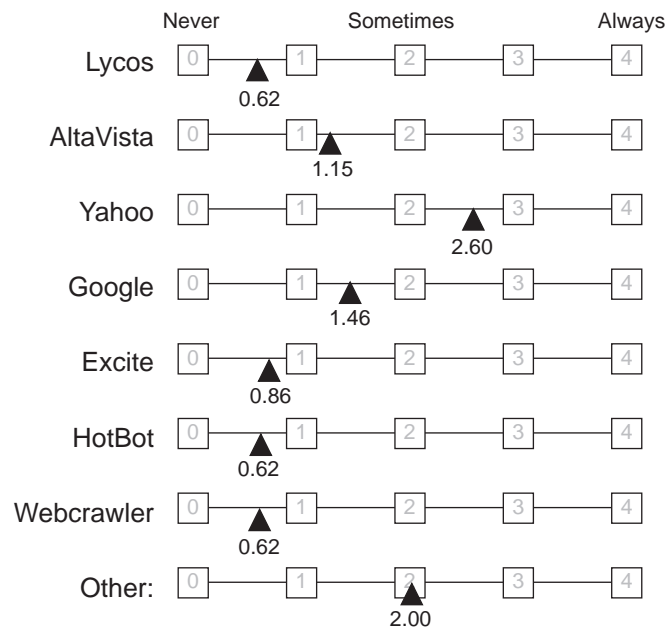
Results: Search Engine

Purpose: Determine relative awareness and use of search engines and directories.

Section: "Searching the Web"

Method: Each response is assigned a value from 0 to 4. The aggregate score is the sum of the value for each response multiplied by the number of responses. The average is the aggregate score divided by total responses.

When researching a topic on the web,
I use: (mark box to indicate frequency)



Note:

High value for "Other" indicates that list is insufficient. Next version of survey should at least include AOL, Earthlink, and MSN as choices.

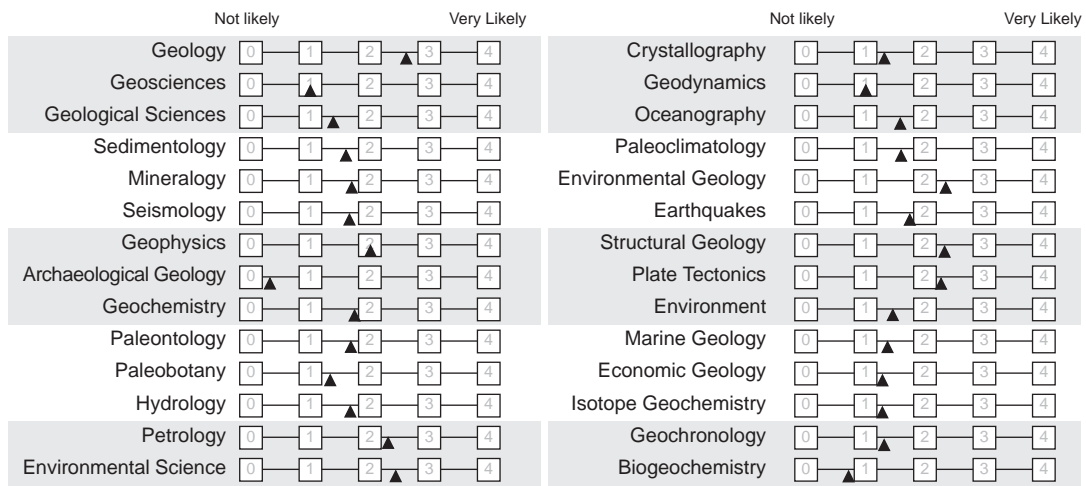
Results: Keywords

Purpose: Determine relative ranking of keywords with relevance to the department.

Section: "Search Topics"

Method: Each response is assigned a value from 0 to 4. The aggregate score is the sum of the value for each response multiplied by the number of responses. The average is the aggregate score divided by total responses.

Assume that you are using your favorite search engine to locate information relevant to your interest in geology. How likely are you to use these keywords? Mark the box which you feel best applies.



Results: Comments

Purpose: Allow respondents to express their expectations and needs in geology department web sites.

Section: "Comments"

Eight of fifteen respondents answered this section

Provide a few examples of the type of information you would expect to be available at a web site whose purpose was recruiting graduate students in the field of geology.

Faculty → Current projects & students
.pdf papers

Program requirements

Application → Michigan's application is very difficult to find and download from the Rackham School

Current research topics
Lab/Field equipment available
Program requirements
Graduate courses available
Typical workload
National ranking data

Courses (and when available)
Professor's home pages
Research-including publication
Facilities-pictures of building
Field trips

Directory of faculty and graduate students with a paragraph on each research group's activities.

List of classes (& descriptions) normally offered in the department

Faculty profiles/research
Major areas of research
Graduate student profiles/research
Facilities and equipment available to students

Links to faculty research articles/abstracts
Application to program
Student's e-mail address for contact info
Academic calendar
Statistics on how many students complete program, how long it took them, and what they do after (career-wise)
Scholarship info

Links to specific research being done
Photos of student in the field
Classes offered by the department

- 1) Most recent research project
- 2) faculty funds (amount, duration, sponsors)
- 3) faculty web site (personal)

Implications for geo.lsa.umich.edu

Demographics and Likert-Scale Responses

- A mailing list based on those expressing interest in our program yields a significant return rate.
- Mailing in mid to late summer appears to be appropriate.
- Total costs for this survey (below \$200) are reasonable enough to warrant annual repetition.
- Relatively slow (56K) network connections will continue to be a significant limiting factor. Files must be sized with this in mind.
- Color depth and monitor size argue for continued restriction in color palette and page complexity. 500-600 pixel width pages should be the norm.
- Users tend to lag one browser version behind the current release. This agrees with published studies on browser version distribution. New tags, and those specific to later-version browser should be avoided.
- Users indicate an above average level of competence and comfort with the web. This may reflect either the age and university experience of the users, or the commonly reported differences between actual and perceived performance.
- Respondents reported that downloading files is almost as difficult as installing hardware. PDF files should probably be used only for documents or document packages where the user is expected to print them.
- Reported search engine and directory usage matches published usage statistics. Directory listings and keywords should be arranged to match the expectations and structure of Yahoo, Google, and Alta Vista.
- The high score for "Other" in search engines implies that the list used is somewhat out of date. Other studies indicate the AOL and the Microsoft Network are also key players. It would be a good idea to establish accounts on both those services as part of a testing program.

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- With one or two exceptions, the keyword reflects the interests of the respondents. Future surveys should allow for the addition of several others by the respondents.
 - Studies of keyword searching behavior have demonstrated that almost all users rely on single-word searches. Boolean searching is limited to a few sophisticated users. Where possible, keywords should be significant as single

Free-Response Section

The casting of the web as a sales and marketing venue over the last few years has affected the expectations of most users. The responses we've received can be seen as an expression of this. The common thread seems to be a desire for information about the "product"-what are the costs, what are the benefits, and how do I order the item? Students wish to be informed consumers.

Most of the suggested items can be implemented easily. Several merely require the addition of links to other websites-national ranking figures, for instance. Some are already in the works, and should be online within the next few months. What we must consider, however, is what type of funding and financial information to make available, and how to present it in a fashion that is acceptable within the context of the department's political environment and the needs of privacy and confidentiality.