

The Future of the Academic Library and the Academic Librarian

A DELPHI study reloaded

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Poland





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The Future of the Academic Library and the Academic Librarian. A DELPHI Study

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Reason for the study

- A DELPHI Study of 1998/1999 - predicting the future of academic libraries and librarians for 2005, presented at the 20th IATUL Conference in Chania, Greece
- Changes in technology, education, publishing models, law regulations, etc.
- New attempt to predict the future



Objectives

- ❑ To verify the results of the previous study (comparison of the experts' predictions with the reality as of the year 2005) – a „reality check“
- ❑ To make further prediction, focused on competencies that librarians should develop as professional information suppliers and experts, in order to meet future needs

Methodology

- Expert Panel
- III rounds of questionnaires with closed and open questions

Expert Panel

- experts of the study conducted in 1999
 - IATUL professionals
 - other professionals
-
- **35** experts responded to the first round
 - **29** experts responded to the second and/or third round
 - The experts represent **20** countries from **4** continents

First round

- Four tasks/questions to be answered in the context of:
 - libraries today
 - libraries in 2015
- Tasks the same as in the study of 1999

First round tasks

(Experts were asked to use in replies the categories defined in the study of 1999)

- **List five factors**, which have/will have the **biggest impact** on the picture of academic library in your country, starting with the most important ones. If a factor needs explanation or further subdivision – please include it.
- Discuss briefly **five main areas of library activities** as of today/as expected for 2015. Arrange them in order, starting with the most important ones.
- List at least **four characteristics** (or/and skills) **of a person to be employed in the academic library** today/in 2015, in the order of their importance.
- List **five the most difficult problems when dealing with electronic media** today/in 10 years from now.

Statistical methods

- In each of four tasks:
 - The most important factor has been ranked „5“, the next „4“, ..., the fifth: „1“. Factors on places further than 5 (or not mentioned ones) have been ranked „0“
 - There were two values calculated for each factor in all tasks:
 - **arithmetic mean** of the ranks given by all experts
 - **median** calculated for each factor from the ranks given by all experts.

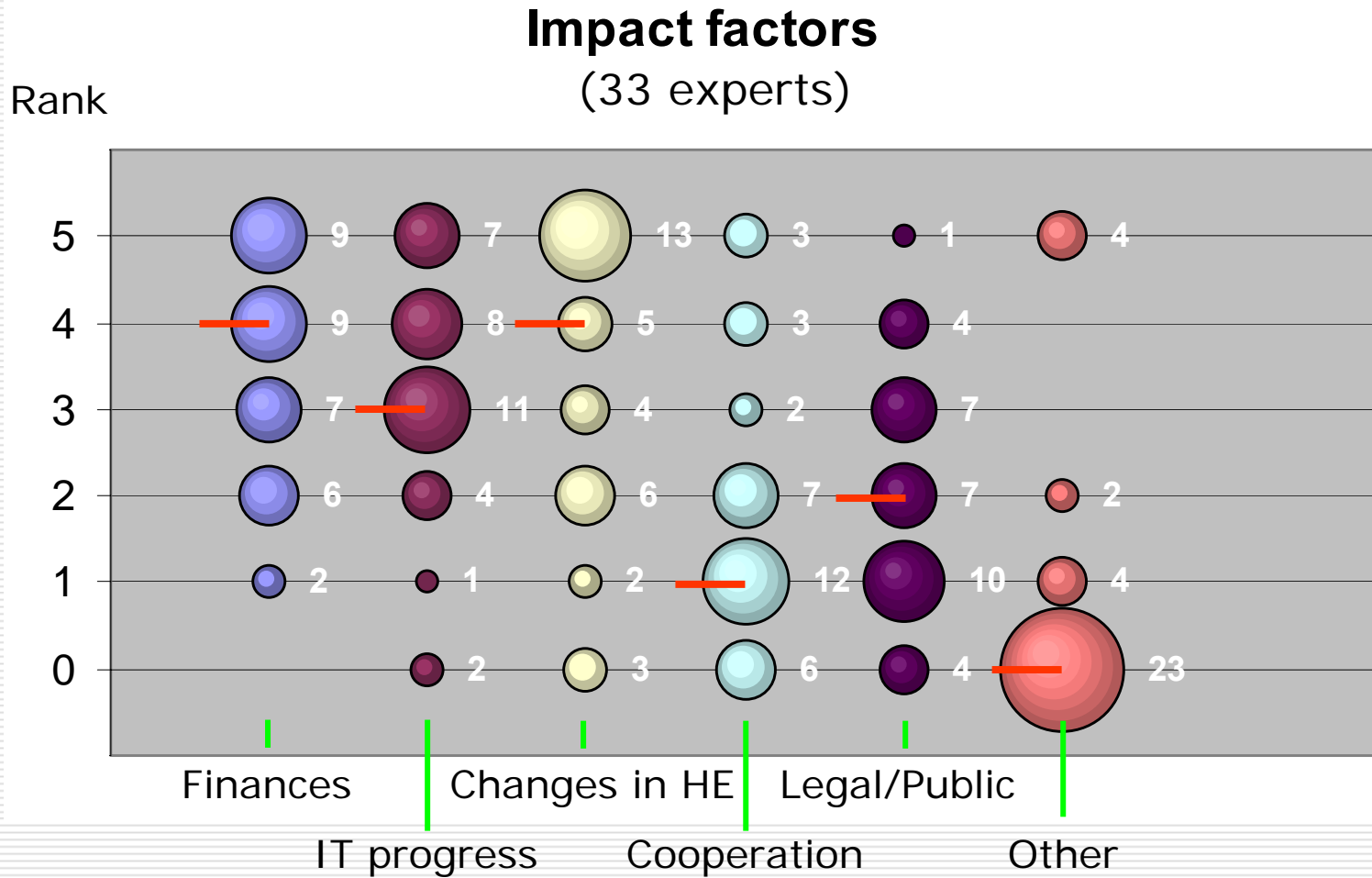
Analysis of round I:

Part I:

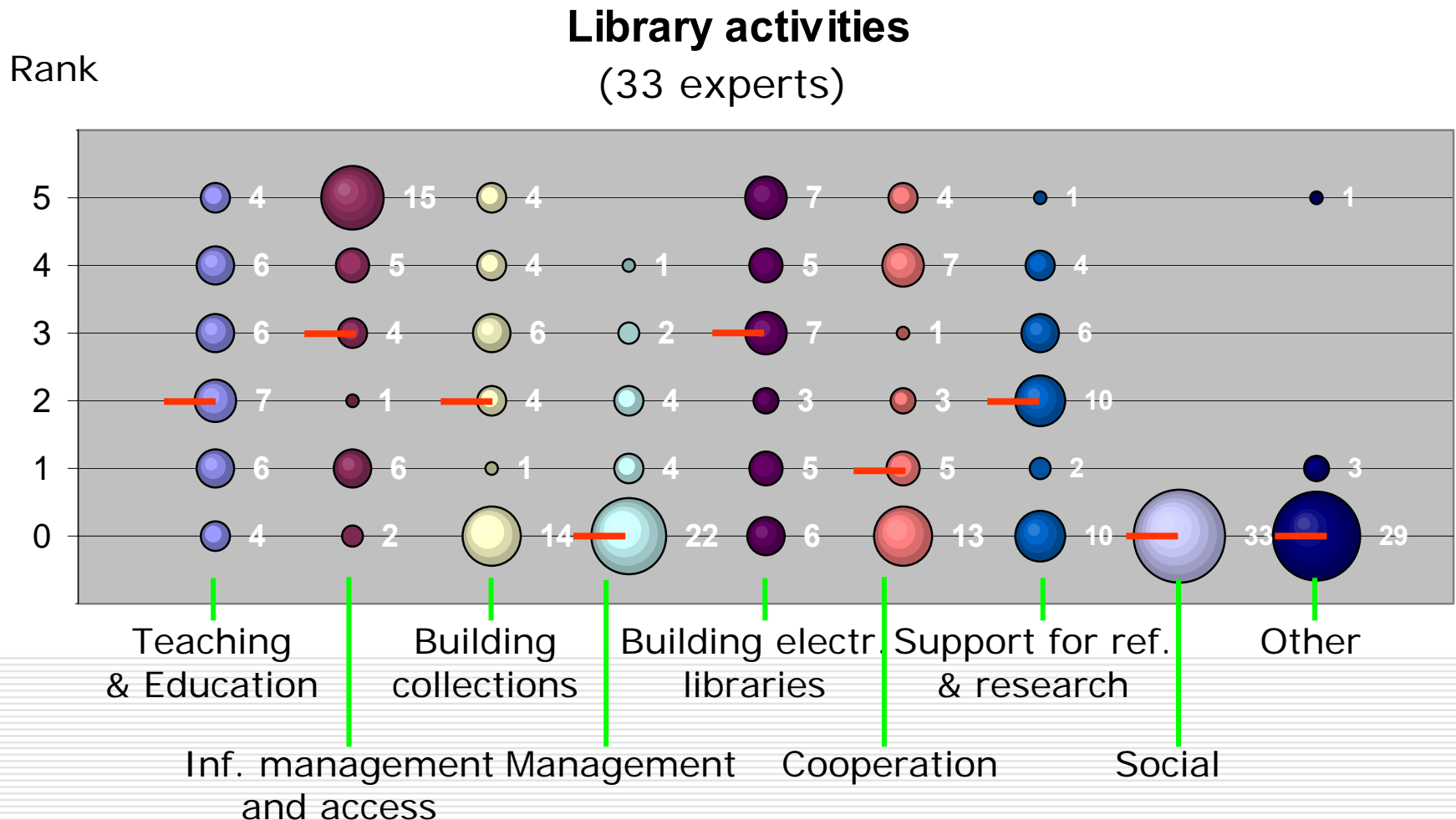
Reality of 2005.

„Reality check“ of the prediction

Distribution of responses to the first round - **today**



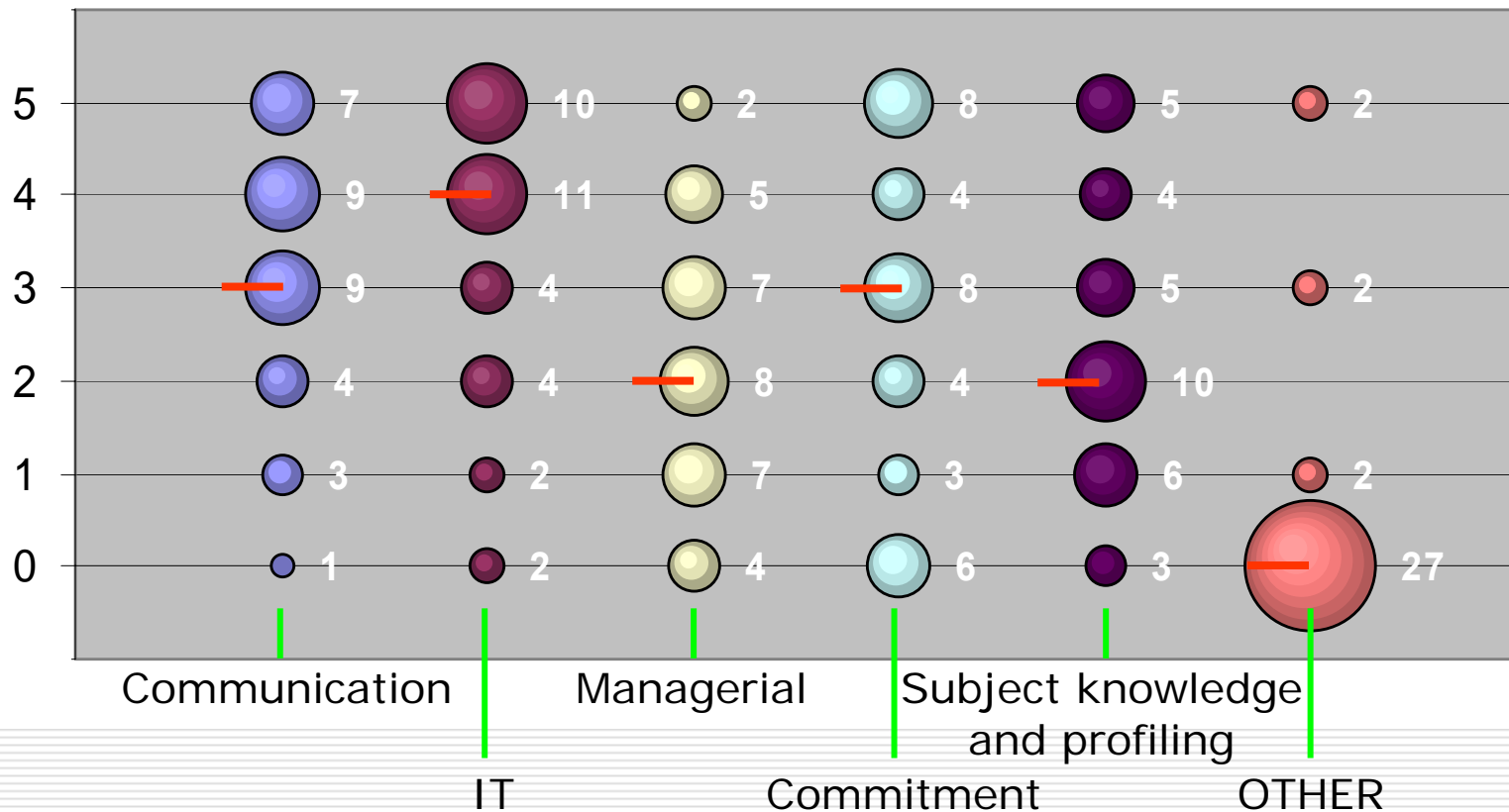
Distribution of responses to the first round - **today**



Distribution of responses to the first round - **today**

Skills of librarians
(33 experts)

Rank

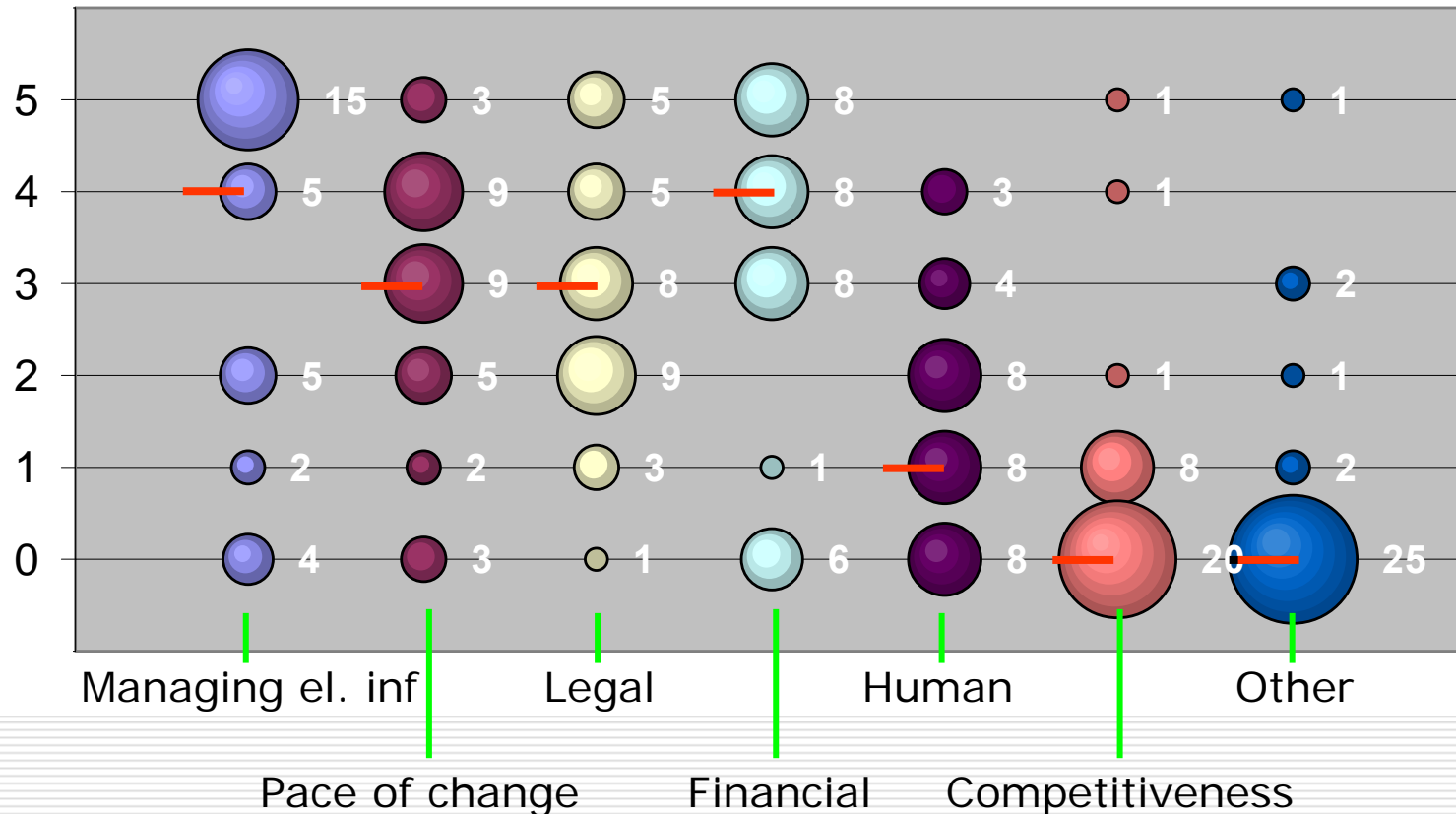


Distribution of responses to the first round - **today**

Problems with Electronic Media

Rank

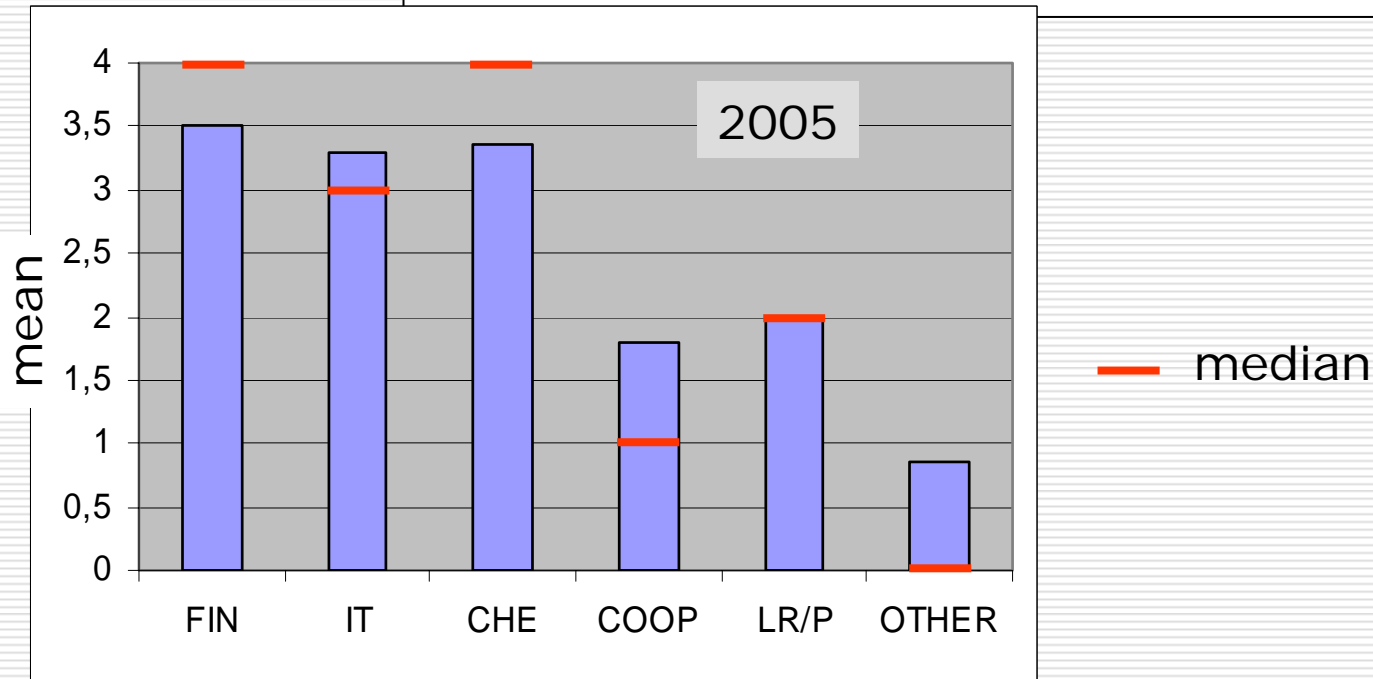
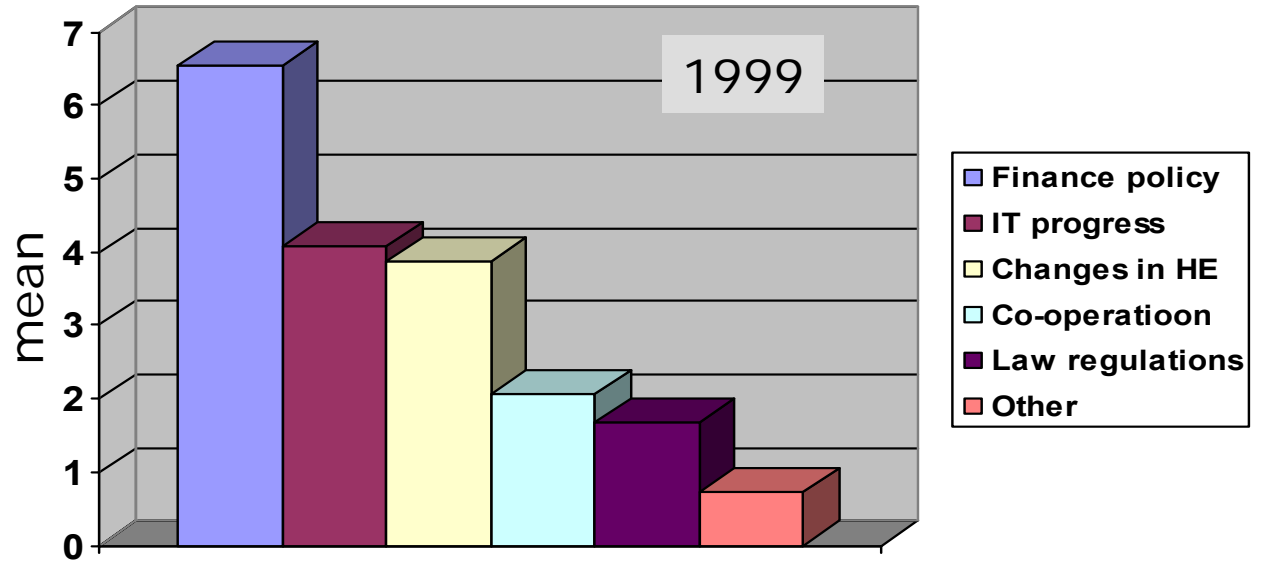
(31 experts)



Comparison of current study with predictions of 1999

Although in the next statistical analysis we used median, the comparison with the results of 1999 must have been done using arithmetic means of ranks, because they were calculated in the old study.

Impact Factors



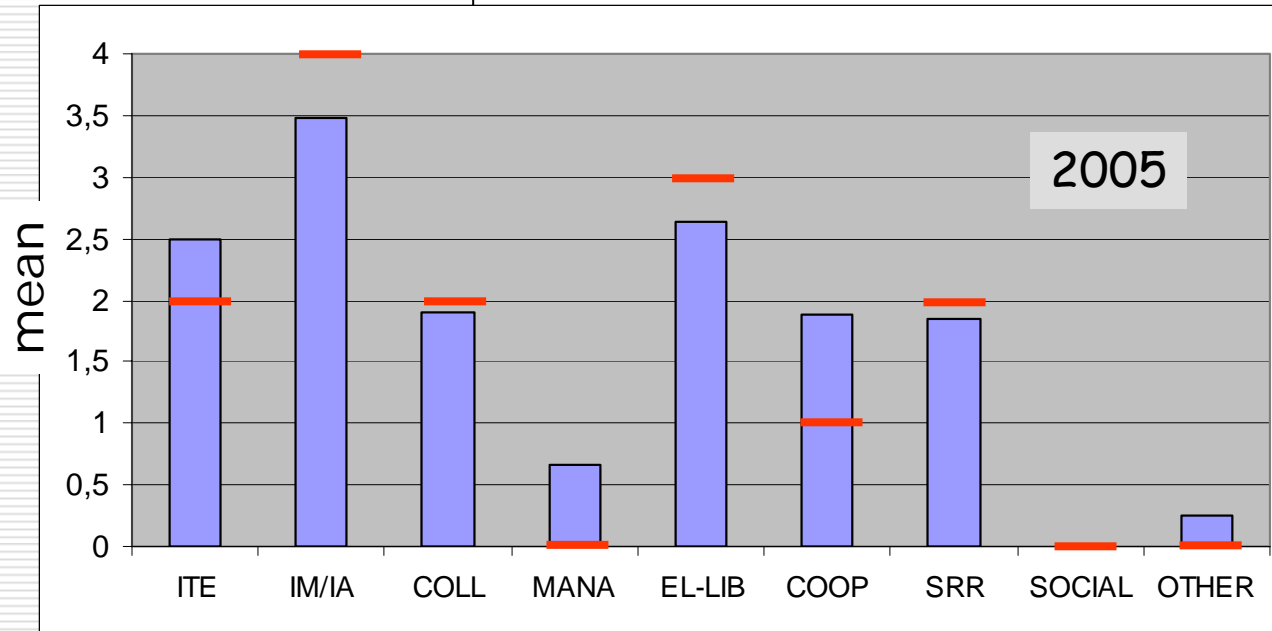
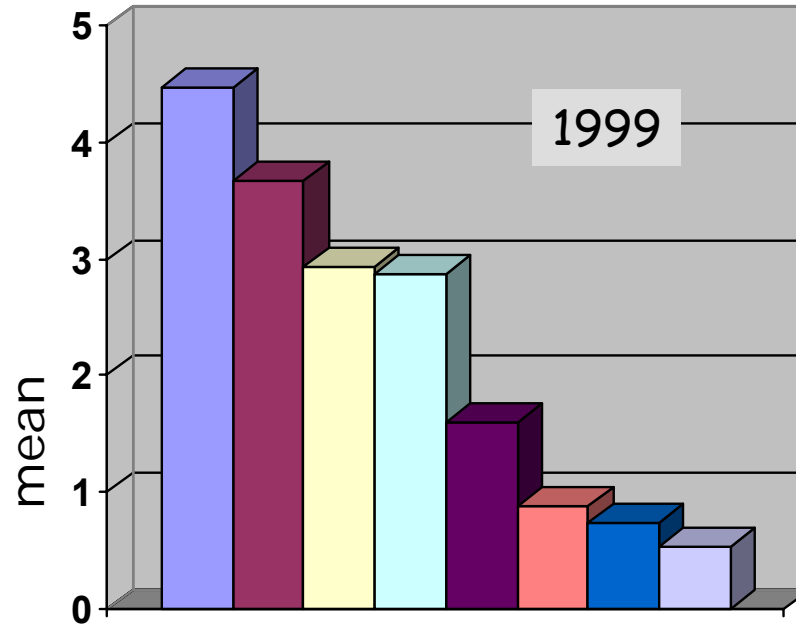
Impact factors (predicted vs. current)

Observations and remarks

- Finance policy, as predicted, is the most important factor shaping the image of libraries
- Changes in higher education, IT progress and law/public issues have influenced libraries much more than expected 6 years ago
- New factors mentioned in Experts' remarks include:
 - a bad quality of staff (inadequate salaries don't allow to hire high quality staff, which are highly required) implies outsourcing of services
 - a raise of users expectations
 - **the Internet becomes a competitor to the library (Google and other search engines)**
 - there is a constant pressure on the quality and evaluation of services, which drives library evolution
 - standardization is becoming more and more important

Library activities

— median

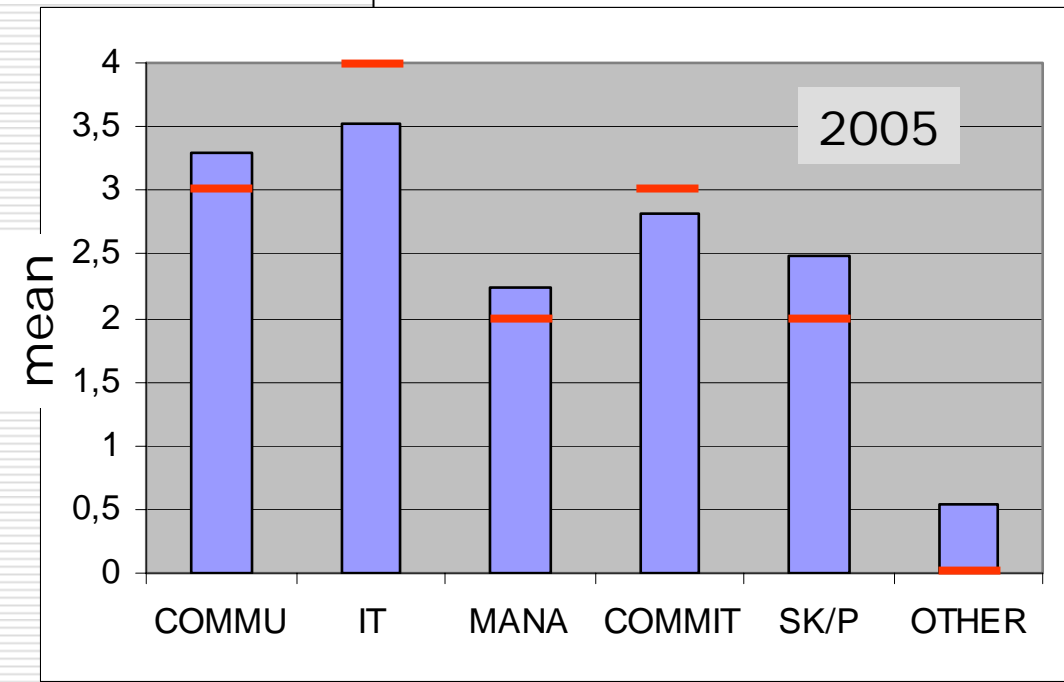
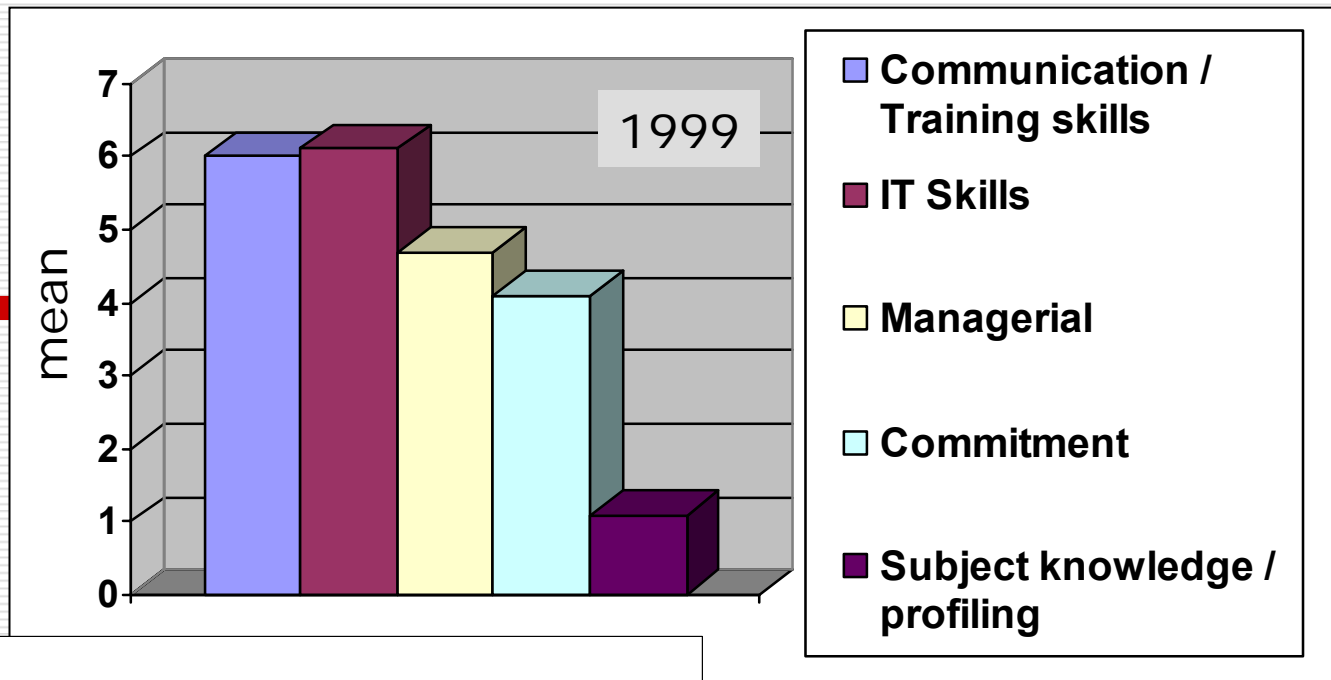


Library activities

(prediction vs. current)

- Information access and management turned out much more important than the involvement in teaching and education, which was predicted as the most important activity.
- Creating electronic libraries is much more time-consuming and important activity than predicted
- Libraries of today do not fulfill social functions despite earlier predictions.
- New activities mentioned by Experts:
 - Opening hours: 24/7
 - Reorganization works (e.g. to create space for group learning, digitize collections etc.)
 - **Finding ways and solutions to provide access to information, complying with the growing legal limitations**

Skills of librarians



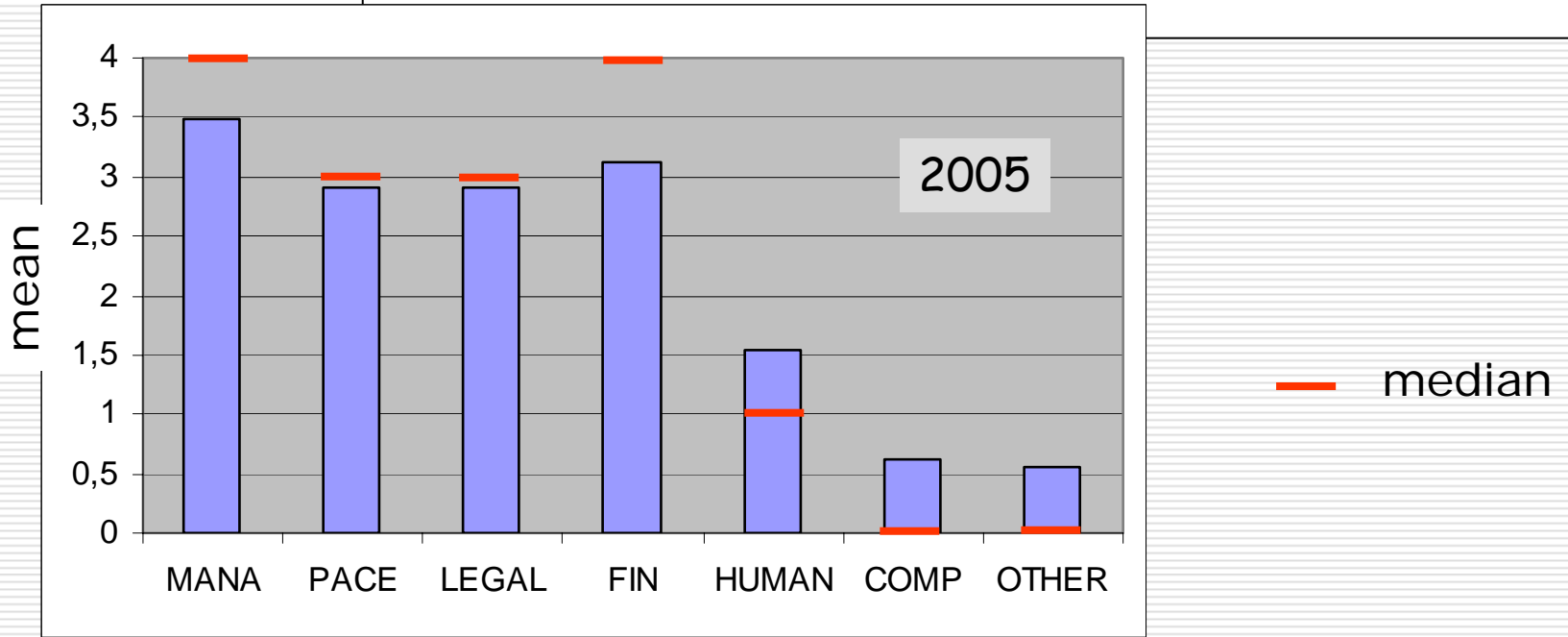
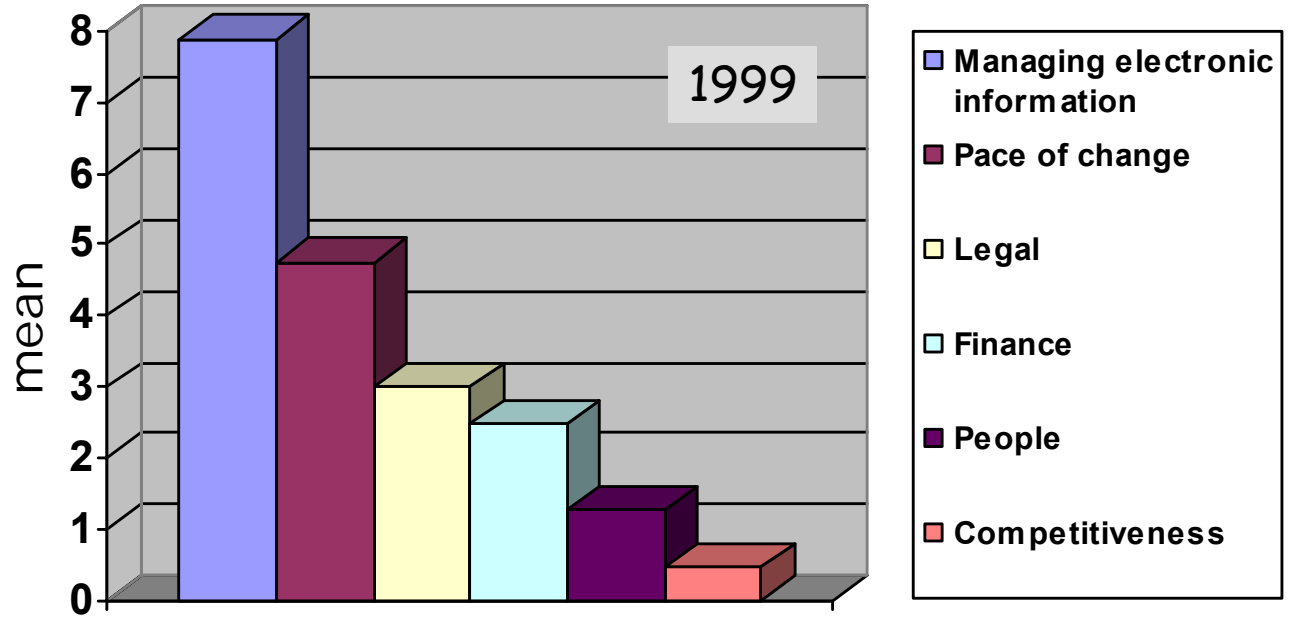
— median

Skills of librarians

(predicted vs. current)

- IT and communication skills on top, as predicted
- Subject knowledge (profiling) as much important as commitment and management skills – much more important than predicted
- Other skills required:
 - **Ability to adapt changes, flexibility, creativity, innovative thinking**
 - Professional curriculum to comply with the government standards, indicators, evaluations.
 - **Ability to find additional money/savings/sponsors (fundraising abilities)**
 - Professionalism
 - Integrity with and understanding the organization (the library)
 - Good understanding both: print and electronic resources, and the nature of the Internet

Electronic media



Problems with electronic media

(predicted vs. current)

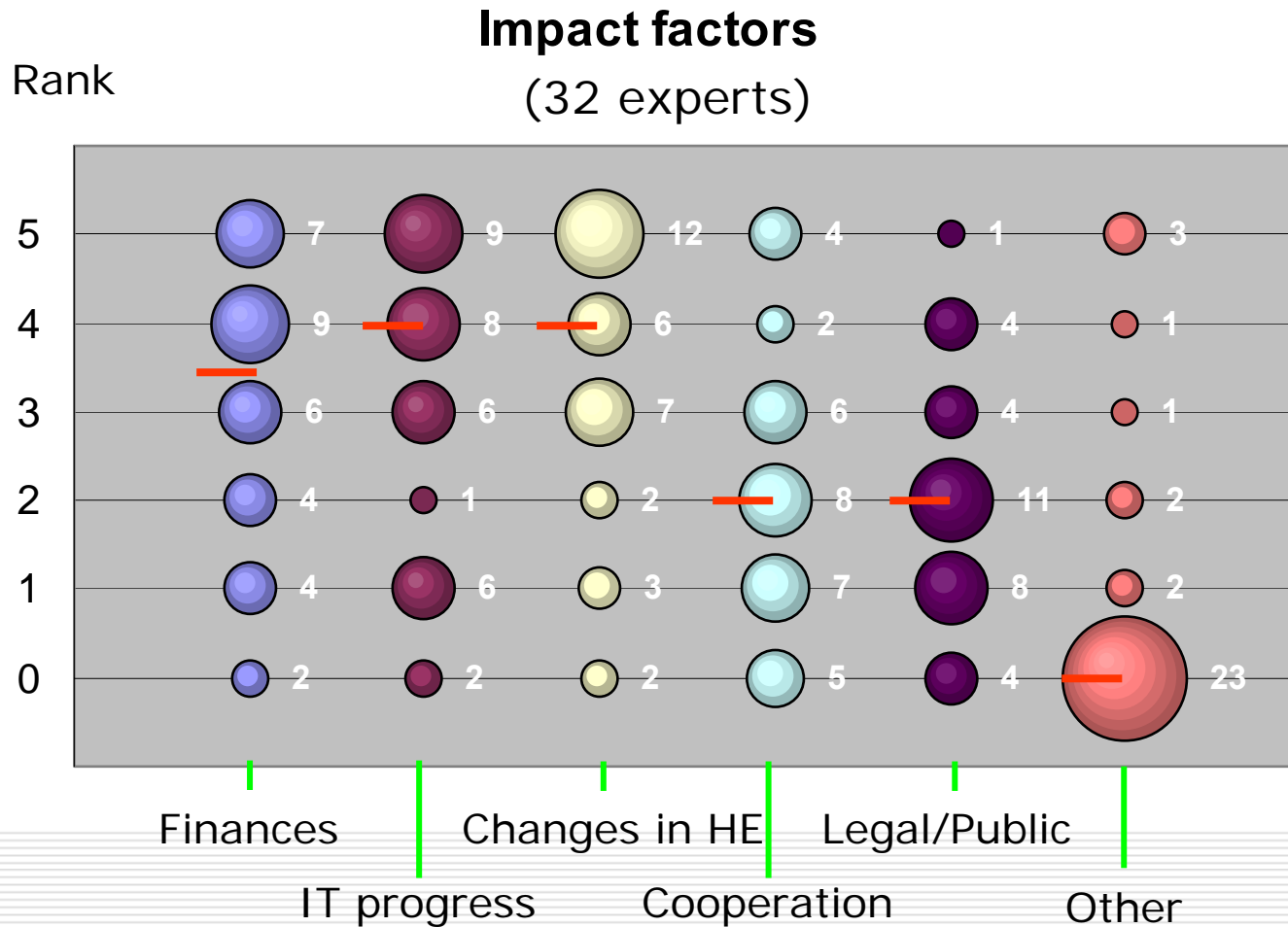
- Managing – as predicted is the greatest problem with the electronic information
- Financing electronic resources turned to be much more complicated problem than expected (look, how optimistic the Experts were regarding this six years ago...)
- Legal aspects – more important than expected
- Other problems mentioned:
 - Consortium deals need sacrifices
 - **Risk of dependence on external providers**
 - **Preservation and archiving issues**
 - Legal contracts dictated by providers
 - Poor interfaces and documentation

Analysis of round I:

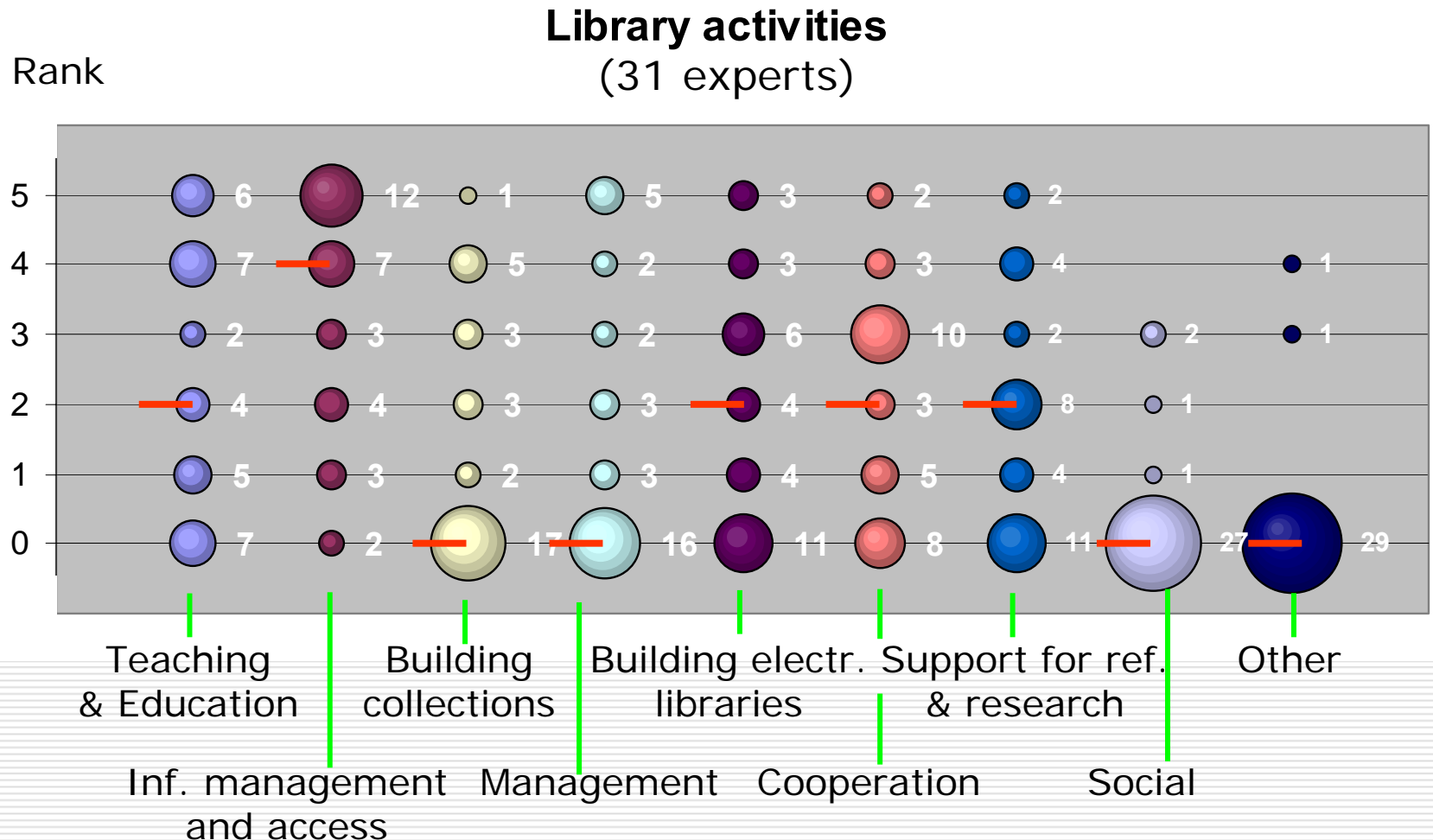
Part II:

Predicting the future for 2015

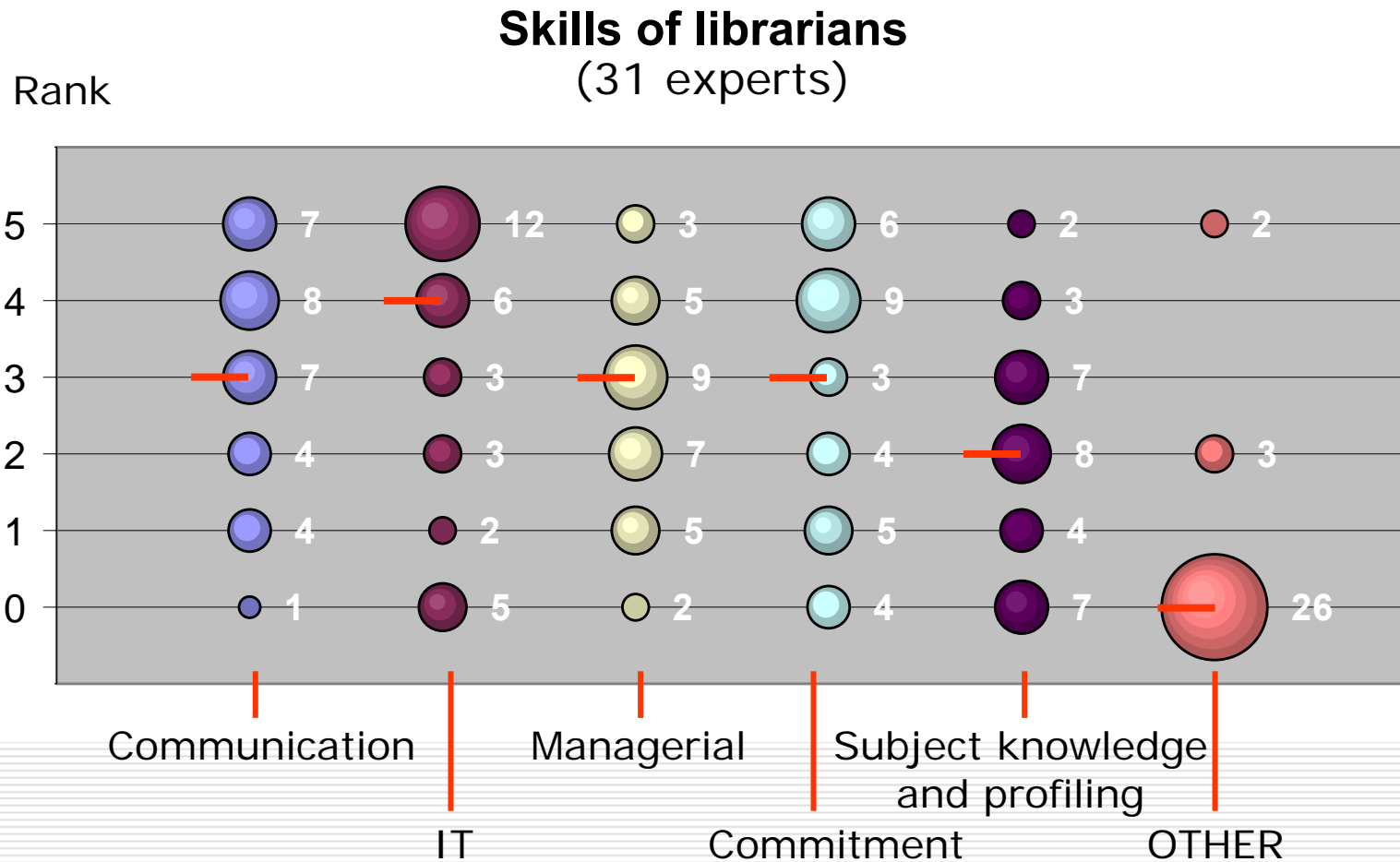
Distribution of responses to the first round - 2015



Distribution of responses to the first round - 2015



Distribution of responses to the first round - 2015

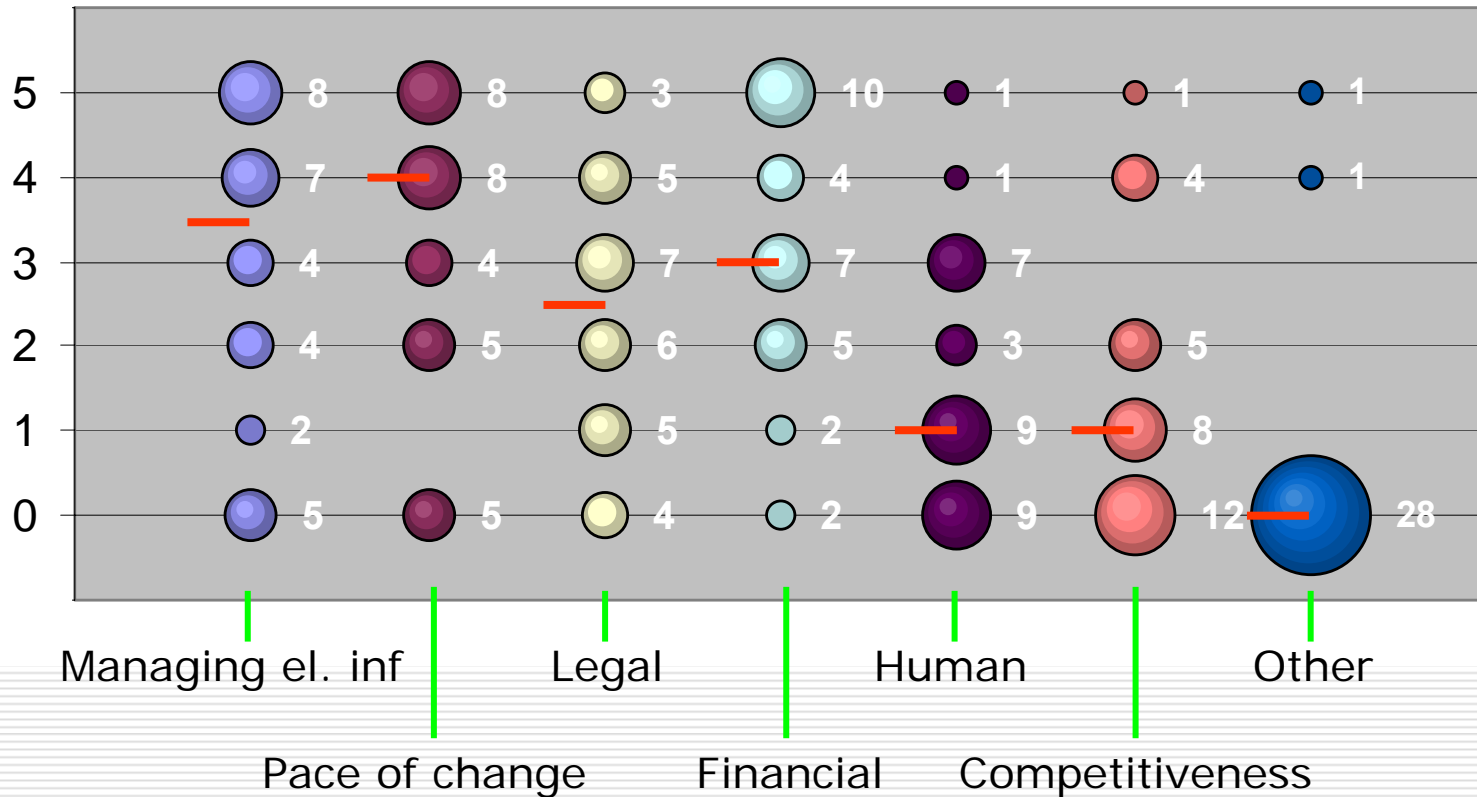


Distribution of responses to the first round - 2015

Problems with Electronic Media

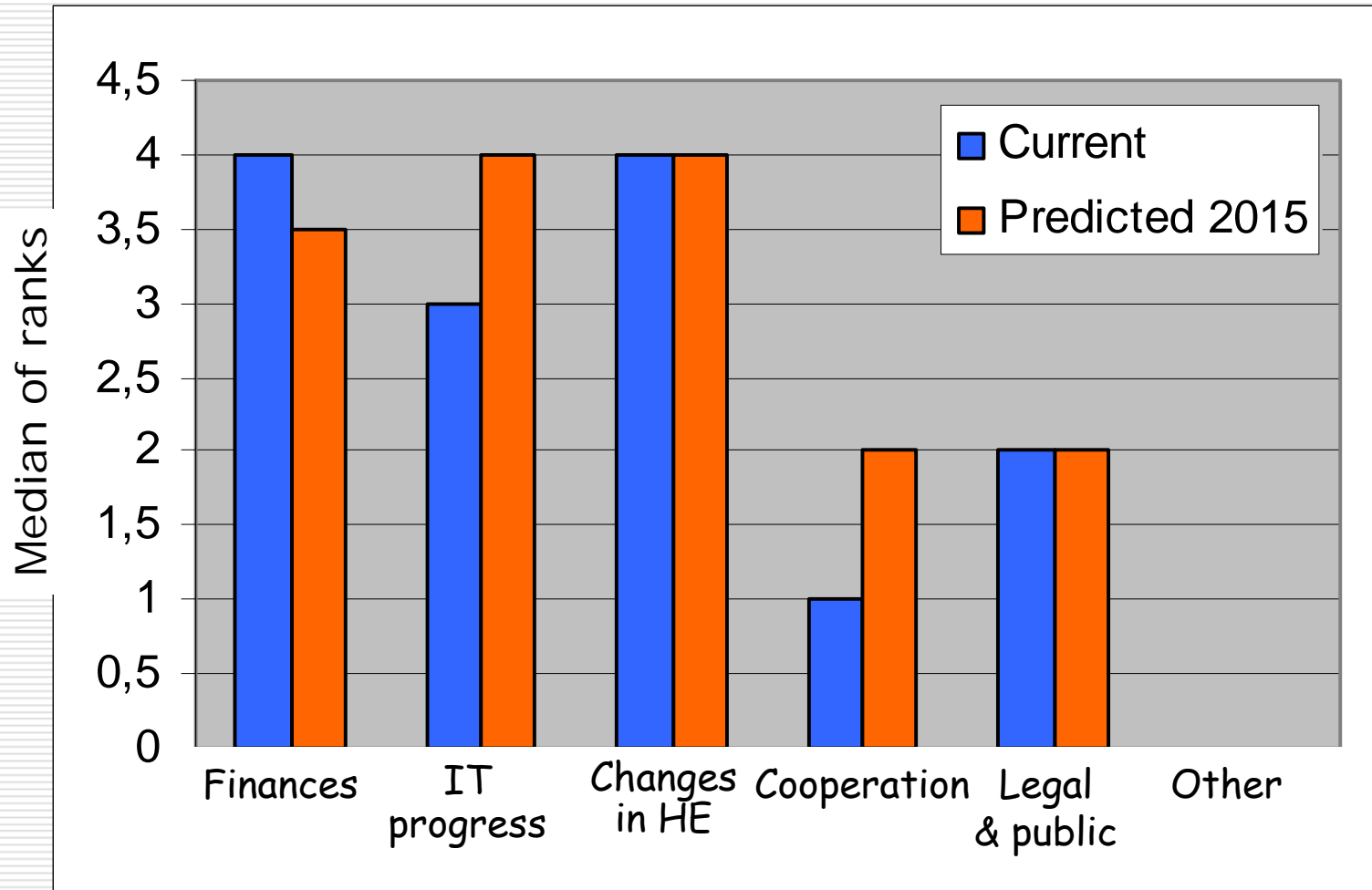
Rank

(30 experts)

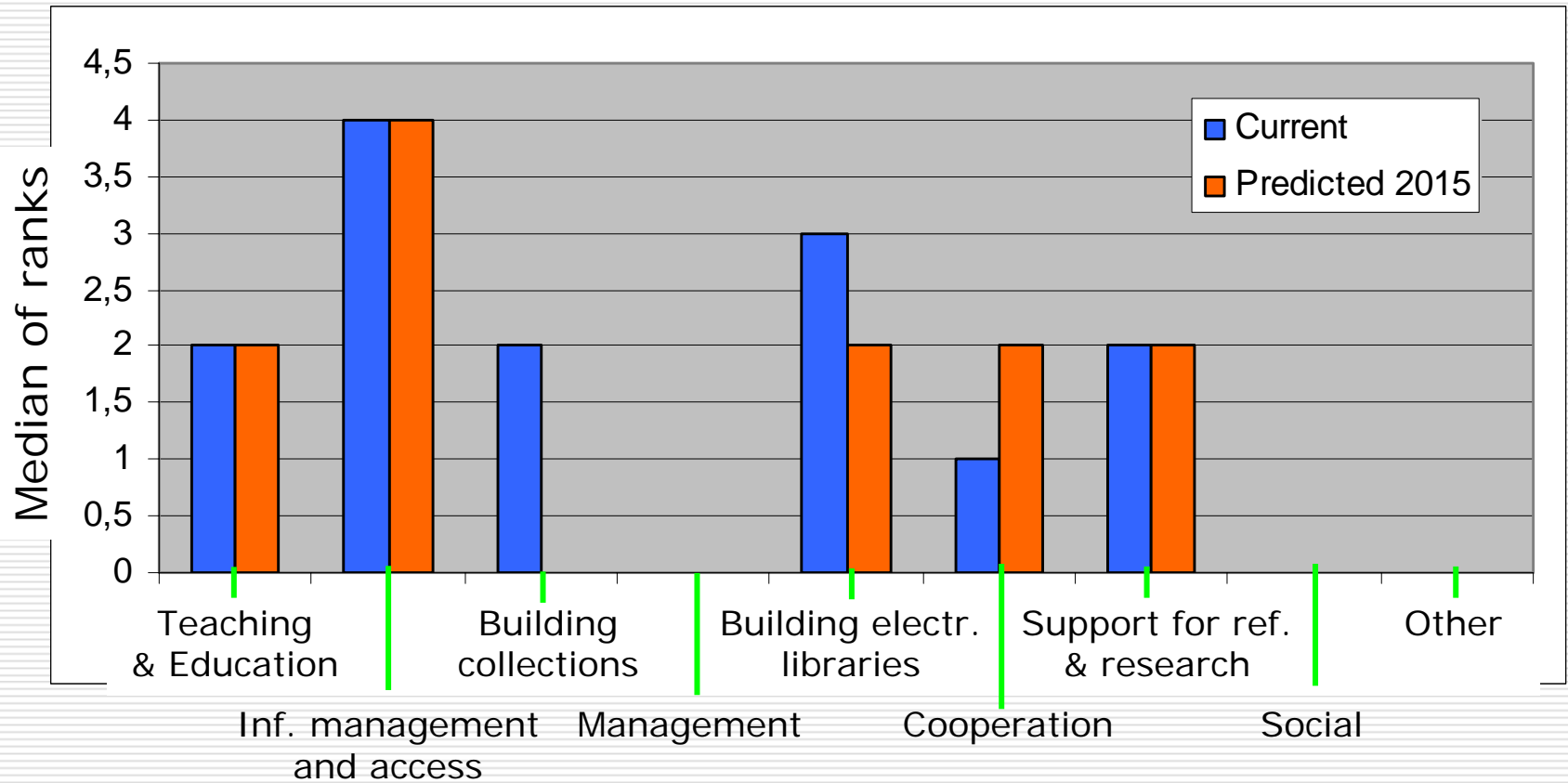


Current study: prediction for 2015
compared to the state of 2005

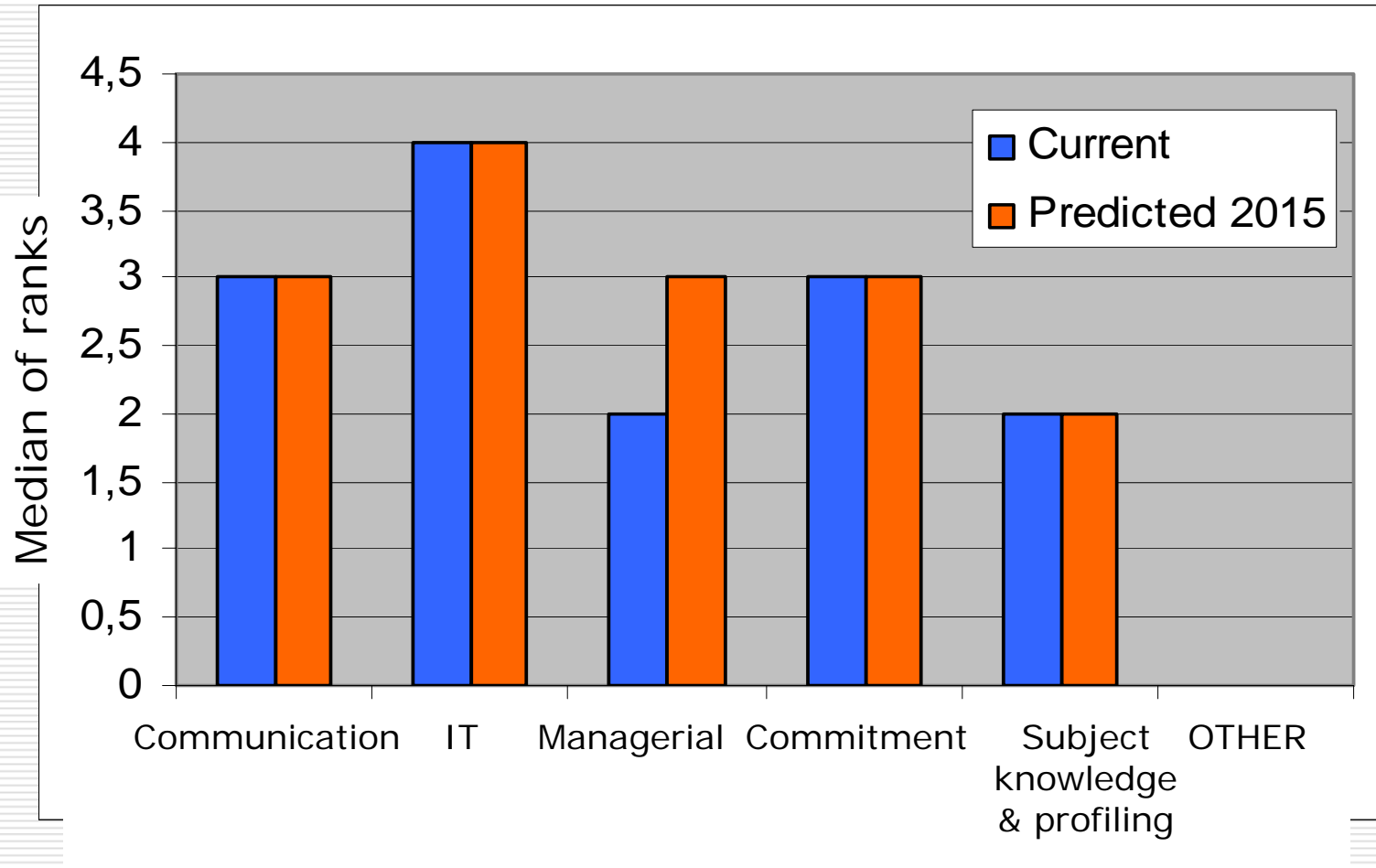
Impact factors



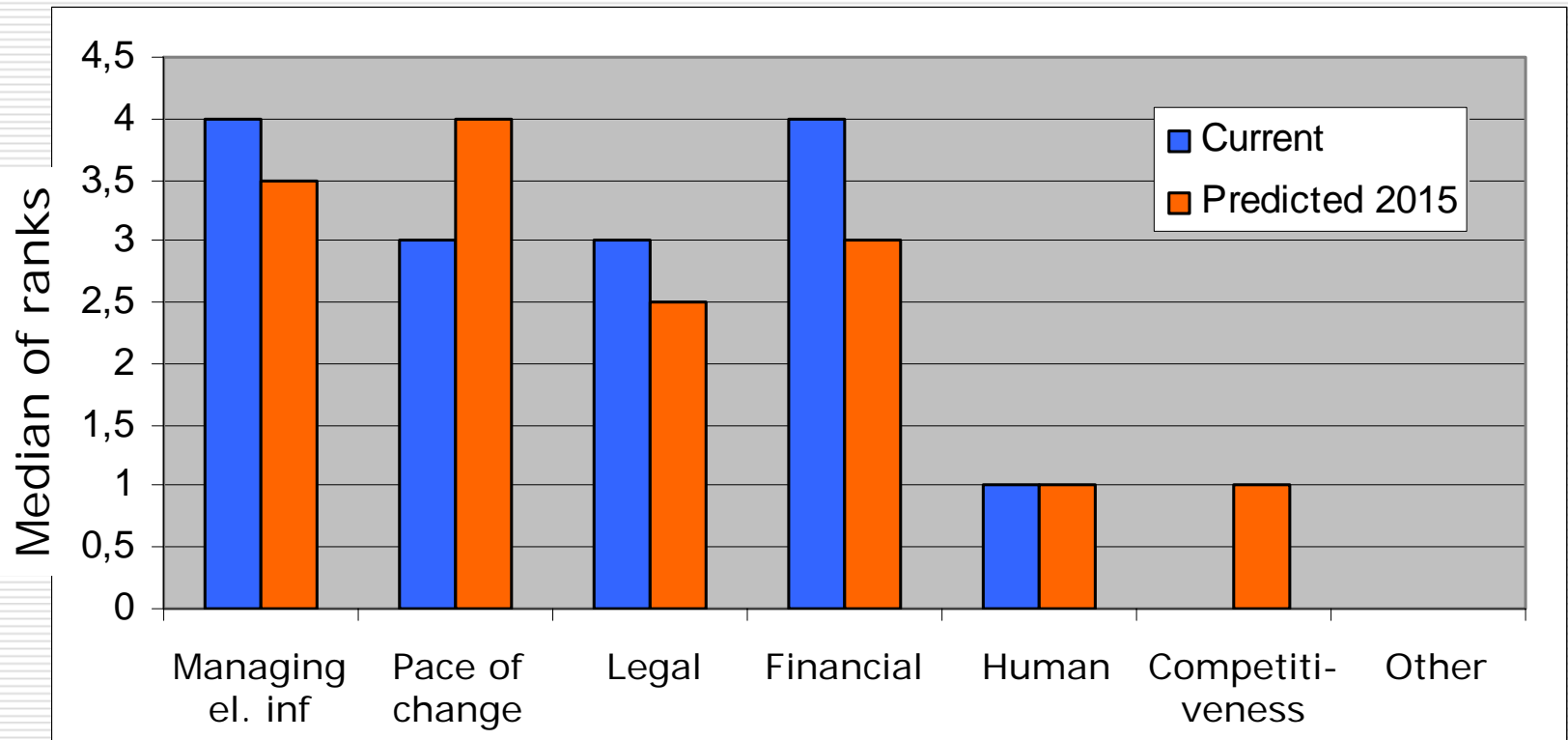
Library activities



Skills of librarian



Problems with electronic media



Second/Third round

/prediction for 2015/

Initial questions of the second round raised many controversies. As a result, the authors conducted the third round to clarify standpoints.

Questions of the second/third round:

1. The Internet as a competitor to the library

- A. What percentage of queries asked by academic library users and related to the **reference** information, will be in the year 2015 directed to the Internet instead of their university library?
- B. What percentage of queries asked by academic library users and related to the **research** information, will be in the year 2015 directed to the Internet instead of their library?

Questions of the second round:

2. Local vs. remote

What percentage of library users will visit the library in person at least once a year, in the university of 2015?

Questions of the second/third round:

3. Print vs. electronic

Imagine the world in 2015 and try to estimate what percentage of information will be accommodated by people via electronic, and not by printed media, making distinction between:

- book reading
- book distribution
- journal article reading
- journal article distribution
- electronic information reading
- electronic information distribution (!?)

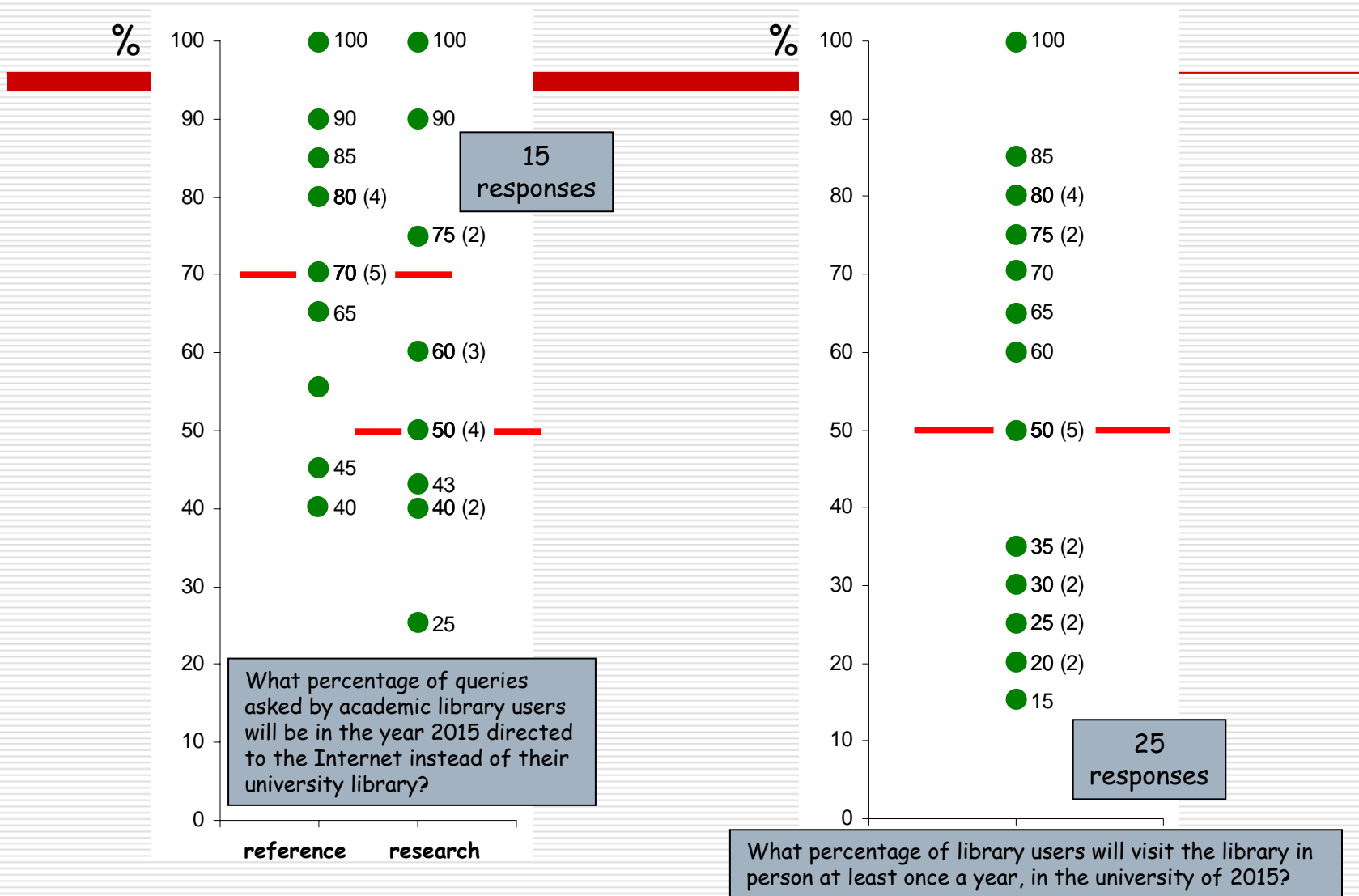
Questions of the second/third round:

4. Training

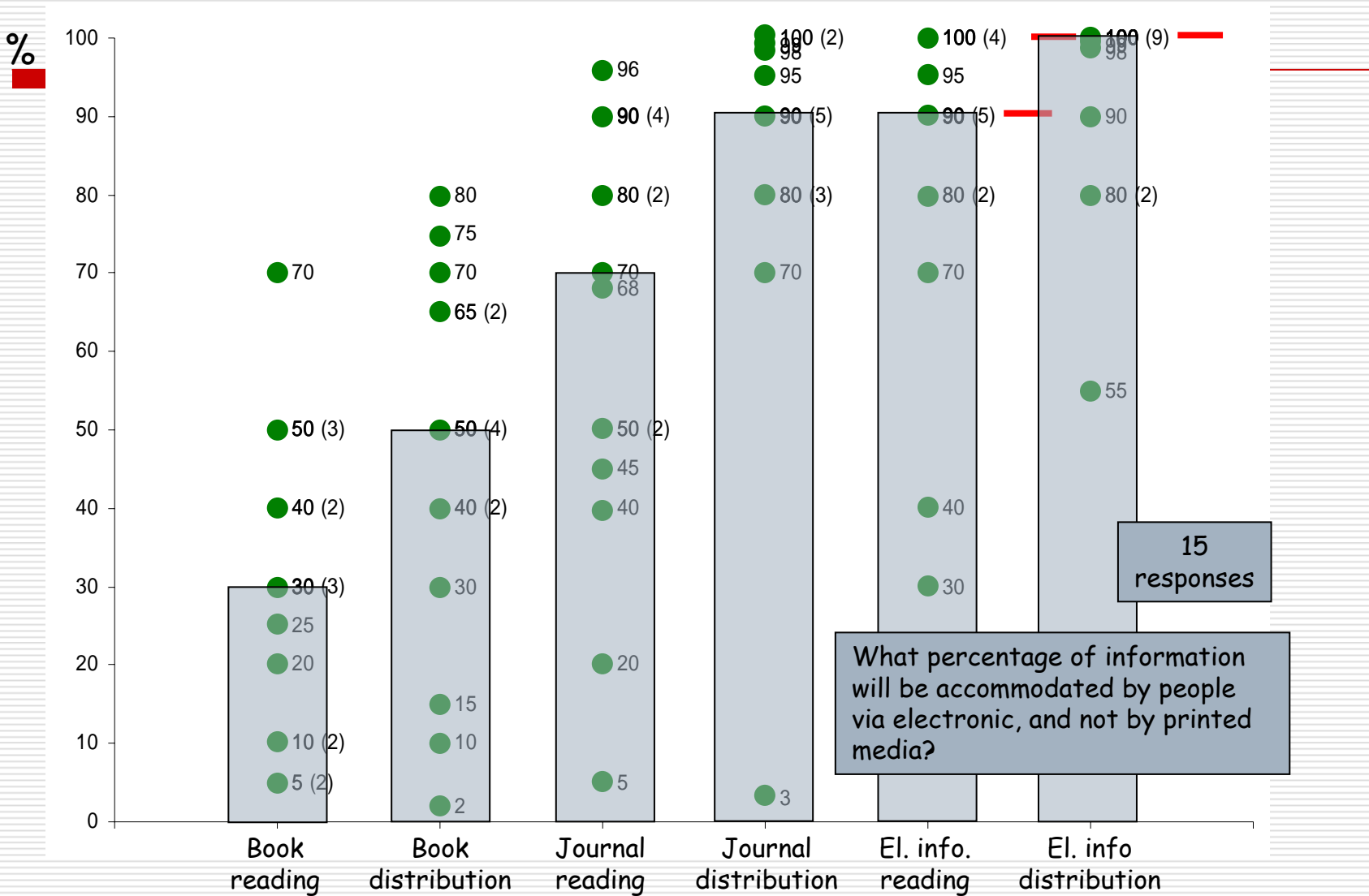
- How much time will user training require (as a percentage of the overall activities in groups a, b, and c)
- How much time (as a percent of the overall working hours) will an average (a, b or c) librarian spent on:
 - self training
 - training others

- a) librarians involved in direct services to library users
 - b) librarians responsible for staff and user training
 - c) other librarians

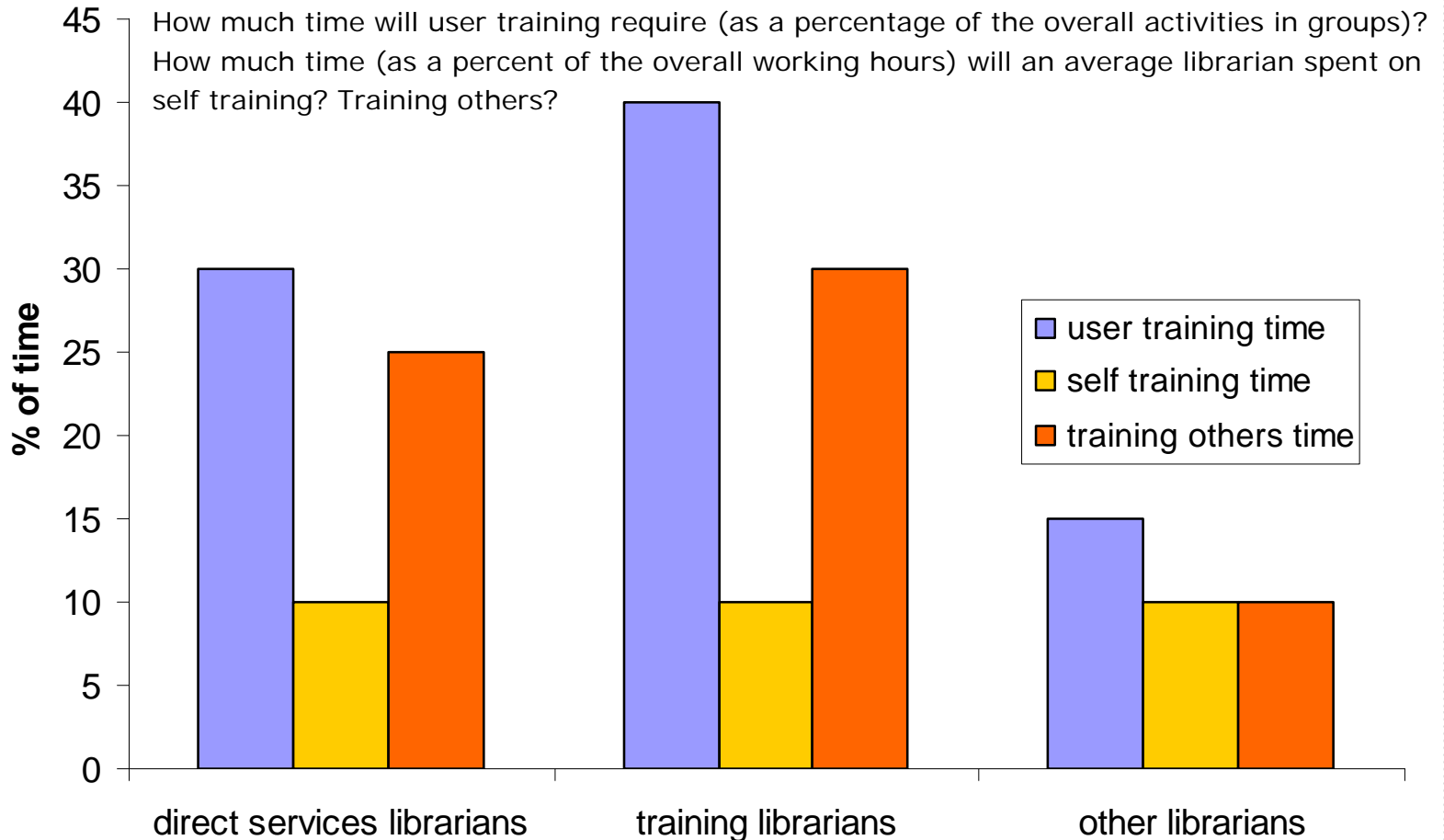
Results of round II/III



Results of round II/III



Results of round II/III



Round II/III –Open questions

Question: “Are we as a profession (librarians) only consumers or also producers of information? Is it our task to provide networked content?”

Aggregated answer:

- Library is all: producer, repackager (manager) and consumer of information. Producer by:**
 - producing networked bibliographic databases**
 - keeping institutional repositories of research output**
 - providing results of digitization projects**
 - contributing to teaching and learning**

Round II/III –Open questions

Question: *“The net and the ‘googling’ of books are driving us to homogeneous library collections. When there is one netbased collection what will make each library distinctive and competitive and perceived as giving value?”*

Aggregated answer:

Libraries will be distinctive by:

- *adding value in selecting, managing and providing the most relevant and the best quality information to users, including their specific print collections***
- *being user-driven and being close to the study and research subjects and needs***
- *providing comfortable space for individual and group learning, social and cultural activities with the human touch.***

Conclusions

- ❑ Most probably libraries will still do exist in 2015
- ❑ Their prior activities will be information management and access, teaching, support for research and cooperation
- ❑ The most important factors to influence libraries will be changes in higher education, IT progress and finances
- ❑ Apart from IT and communication skills, managerial abilities will be the most desirable feature of a librarian in 2015.
- ❑ At least 50% of users will visit the academic library once a year or more, not only to get information but also for social purposes
- ❑ Academic librarian as an information facilitator will be adding value to netbased resources
- ❑ Libraries will become more study and social places than a place to find information. The true value of work done by librarians will be hidden „behind the scenes“.

Selected citations from Experts' opinions

- Libraries will continue to be sanctuaries for meditation, social centers, and escapes from the grind of the real world. (Ed Valauskas)
- I think we need to move on from the mindset of the local 'library' as the core supplemented by digital resources from external providers and the wider internet – to a different mindset where the 'library' is a value-added overlay on the wider canvas of readily available digital information content, which provides value-added presentation and personalised delivery of information resources to match the specific needs of researchers, students and staff in the University, integrated with their other working/study materials (Di Martin).

Selected citations from Experts' opinions

- The level of library usage remains the same over time (Robert Hayes)
- Internet in the current model will NOT survive until 2015. Wake up and smell the coffee. What we know as the Internet will be an ancient joke. There will be pervasive information technologies in abundance, and like electricity or water, will largely be available almost every and anywhere. (Ed Valauskas).

List of Experts

(many thanks to all of them)

Stephanie ATKINS	Prof. Assistant, Circulation Librarian, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Gaynor AUSTEN	Director, Library Services, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia
Toby BAINTON	SCONUL (Standing Conference of National and University Libraries) Secretary, London, UK
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List of Experts

(many thanks to all of them)

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Terry WEECH	Associate Professor, GSLIS, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA
Matjaz ZAUCER	Director, Central Technological Library, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

-
- The Time Machine
 - Director: Simon Wells (2002)
 - Based on novel by H.G. Wells (1895)
 - 24.05.002030
 - 16.07.802701

Thank you for your attention

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