Introduction

The following study is based on the responses of 5 individuals interviewed regarding their information needs. The sample was not randomly selected because it consisted of family, neighbors and former coworkers, but it is diverse with regard to demographics and responses. All interviewees resided within my community (West Oahu). Three were female and two were male. Three of the respondents were in their twenties (25, 27 and 29) and two were in their thirties (32 and 36). Educational background was even more diverse: two of the respondents had completed the 9-12th grades, two had four-year degrees, and one had completed some college. Only two out of the five respondents did not have children under the age of 18 living at home. The only ways in which my sample had no variance was in their access to a computer, use of email and use of the Web; all respondents had a computer in their home, used email and surfed the Web.

Results

The results of this study are grouped into three major themes: reading habits, library usage and information needs. Where there is both quantitative and qualitative data, I will discuss the quantitative results first.

Reading Habits:

Table 1
Hours per Week Spent Reading Online/Computer and Print Materials

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5
Hrs. Online or Computer	1	7-10	15	14	21
Print Materials	1	4	15	14	14

Two respondents read more on the Internet than in print. The remainder read equal amounts in each. The type of material read was very diverse: email, engineering books, romance novels, magazines, journal articles, news, work material, suspense novels, and reference material. The only categories that respondents mentioned more than once were work-related materials and news materials (each were mentioned twice). Overall, reading was done either because it was required (via work or school) or for leisure (to pass the time or for fun).

Library Usage:

Table 2
Number of Visits to the Library within the Last Year (in Person and Online)

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5
In Person	2	10-15	0	0	3
Online	0	4-5	0	0	5

All visits within the prior year were at public, not academic libraries. Only one of the respondents had access to an academic library but did not actually use it. Two of those who visited in person also visited online (one visited online more; the other had more in person visits).

The majority did not have a public library card (3 of 5), but at least one of those respondents without a card still visited a library within the past year (the two remaining did not). The reasons cited for visiting a library included: to pick up bus schedules, to aide in children's homework, "to use a computer when I did not have one," for pleasure, to read up on interests and hobbies, to avoid buying books, to access references for schoolwork not found on the internet, and to attend kids' programs.

The most commonly used service was checking out books (mentioned three times) followed by consulting a librarian or utilizing the reference materials (each mentioned once). Computers at the library were mainly used for checking the catalog, but one respondent mentioned using the computers for homework research. Those who had not visited a library within the past year recalled previous usage with one person referencing as far back as intermediate school.

Reasons why individuals *would* go to the library for the most part mirrored the reasons why they had gone in previous visits: to pick up a book for a child, to avoid buying books, if more kids' programs were offered at more convenient times (after 5 pm), to conduct genealogy research, and if there were a good selection of books on respondent's particular interest.

Information Needs:

Only one respondent could not recall a recent information need. Respondents recalled a need for: a definition of the Kyoto Protocol, genealogical information, information related to moving to Hawaii and finding jobs (mentioned twice), and information to help locate a doctor. The purposes of these searches included: work, school, family and a general need to feel informed. The majority of those recalling a need found the information they were looking for (3 of 4) and did so via the Internet (3 of 4). The individual who did not find information relative to their genealogical search utilized the state library.

When faced with the need for an answer to a question, the majority relied on the Internet (primarily Google and Wikipedia). Two mentioned asking a person with one person relying on a friend and the other on an expert. Only one individual mentioned a

preference for a person over the Internet. She said, "I go to an expert. Then, I go to a book. The Internet is my last resort." Her feelings were in the minority.

Analysis and Suggestions for Further Research

If we are to compare these results to the results of the studies that are summarized in this week's readings, we will find some similar findings as well as some differences. To start with the basics, Internet usage was for the most part heavy among the adults interviewed. This evidence corroborates the study Rubin cites that found "between the ages of 18 and 50, use of the internet exceeds 64 percent" (20). Reading, in general, did not vary much with regard to demographic background. For example, the one person who did not read much had only a high school diploma, but the other respondent with a high school education read as heavily as those who were college-educated. Her reading did differ, however, from college graduates in that it was entirely work-related, whereas college graduates appeared to either have more desire to or time for pleasure reading.

Rubin also summarizes some of the research of information scientists with regard to information seeking: "people usually search for information in some type of context" (40), "people prefer personal rather than institutional sources to satisfy their information needs" (41), "people seldom see librarians as a source of information" (41), and "people will use the least effort in seeking information" (45). Our results regarding each of these aspects follow.

When looking at the examples of a recent information need, we see that no one mentioned an information need that materialized out of thin air. Rather, information was generally sought in some context whether it was to find out more information for an upcoming move or to understand a reading assigned for class.

These results, however, failed to demonstrate the finding that personal resources are preferred over institutional. This is because all but one of the respondents demonstrated a preference for neither rather four of five respondents claimed to first consult the Internet when an information need arises. This does not mean that the respondents do not prefer personal resources, but that our survey was limited. Future studies could have interviewees rate different sources of information using a scale that goes from 1 to 5 (1 being "mostly likely to use" and 5 being "least likely to use"); this type of inquiry would be more likely to evaluate this issue accurately.

As far as perceptions of librarians, our results mirrored the studies in the readings. None of the interviewees mentioned librarians as a resource. Further studies could be done to explore why this is a common feeling. Using the type of scale previously mentioned, respondents would rate their perceptions of librarians (how helpful they are, how approachable they are, how good a resource they are, etc).

Another way our results reflected research findings is in the effort individuals use to find information. We found that respondents did seem to rely on the most "convenient" source. Since all respondents had a computer at home, finding information on Google and Wikipedia was more convenient than going to the library, and even more convenient than calling up a friend who might know the answer, which was second in preference. As far as barriers to "information seeking", the main barrier appeared to be time constraints which could be an indication of a socioeconomic barrier (e.g. a poorer

person may have to work more, and thus has less leisure time for the library) or a barrier in itself unrelated to socioeconomic status, influenced by personality type (very busy, etc.) or changes in society (if people simply do not have as much leisure time as in the past or if they prefer other activities like television watching or internet browsing during downtime) (45-46). These questions could be further explored by asking interviewees for more socioeconomic data like income level as well as perhaps a time study which would consist of having respondents track how they spend their time over a week or a month.

One interesting result not addressed by Rubin's book are reading habits' influence on library usage. If you compare our respondents reading habits both online and in print, it appears that individuals who did not do much reading did not utilize libraries. This is logical and to be expected. However, for those heavy readers, Internet usage seemed to either supplement library usage or completely eliminate it. It would be worthwhile to take a larger sample to see if this phenomenon is replicated. Such a study could gather qualitative data inquiring into the influence of people's Internet usage on their library usage (i.e. whether people feel the internet eliminates their need for the library, whether they believe the internet leads them to the library or whether internet consumption is irrelevant to their feelings about the library).

Another area of exploration regarding library usage would be to study "drop-outs." Those who had not visited within the last year should be asked how long it had been since they had not visited and the reasons why they stopped going. This was just briefly touched on by this survey.

Overall, I think more socioeconomic data could be gathered in order to evaluate how ethnicity, income, schooling and opportunity influence information seeking behavior, reading habits and computer/Internet usage. Our survey contained very limited socioeconomic questions.

Futhermore, Rubin states that people's information seeking *abilities* differ widely due to "intelligence, analytical ability, and manual dexterity" (44). I disagree with this oversimplification; if Rubin can see that barriers exist to information seeking (46), then he should also see that these same barriers exist against developing information seeking skills. Based on my experience in the library, people's searches seemed more limited by opportunity (never having visited a library before or never having used a computer) or socioeconomic status (individuals did not have a computer at home, parents did not have much schooling or experience with the library, etc.) than by intelligence or analytical ability. I'm not saying intelligence and analytical ability are not a factor, I just believe there are other factors that may or may not be equally or more influential.

In sum, there are many interesting areas for further research. Some areas would require wholly different approaches (e.g. time studies, value scales) while others would simply rely on gathering more data in a particular area (e.g. socioeconomic), obtaining a larger sample, and then running regressions to find out what is or is not correlated. Our survey is limited by sample size (making it difficult to make generalizations about the larger population) and the scope of information sought, but it did manage to reflect many of the findings found in previous research.

Works Cited

Rubin, Richard. *Foundations of Library and Information Science*. New York: Neal
    Schuman Publishers, 2004.