



EBSCO

Popular Magazines on Campus:

Perspectives from Academic Library Professionals

Summary of Findings: Fall 2026

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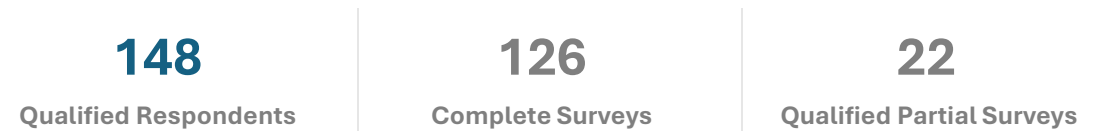
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Methodology

Library Journal fielded the online survey, in partnership with EBSCO, from September 10 through September 27, 2026 among academic library professionals. The core analytic sample includes 148 records: 126 completed surveys and 22 partial surveys with at least one substantive response.

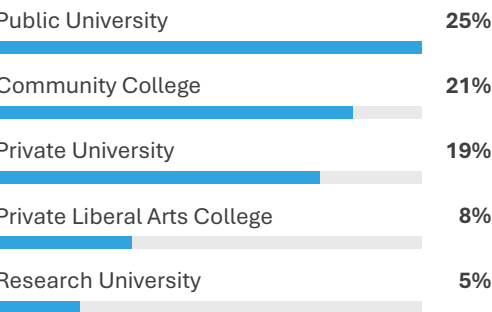
This study examined how academic libraries provide access to popular and digital magazines and how librarians perceive their role in student learning and engagement. It also explored discovery and promotion, barriers to use, and the factors libraries prioritize when evaluating digital magazine services.

Analytic Sample



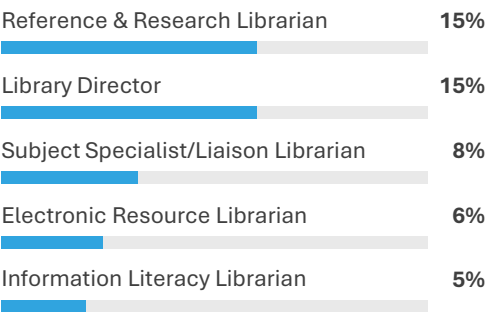
INSTITUTION TYPE

n=148; Top 5 shown



PRIMARY ROLE

n=148; Top 5 shown



Analysis Notes

Results are unweighted and use each question's valid respondent base. Multi-select percentages may exceed 100%. Institution and role categories were grouped for relevant crosstab reporting. Subgroup bases below $n=30$ should be interpreted directionally.

The *Library Journal* research team led the analysis, interpretation, and framing of findings, and employed AI-assisted tools to support data processing and synthesis.

Academic libraries value and provide digital magazines primarily as accessible complements to academic resources.

Respondents report that one of the biggest challenges is connecting students with magazine content through discovery strategies, convenient access, and sustainable service models.

Academic libraries provide popular magazines through a mix of sources.

- Seventy-four percent provide at least one form of digital magazine access, and 57% use two or more access methods.
- Research databases (65%) and print collections (55%) form the collection foundation. Forty-one percent offer a dedicated digital magazine platform.
- Only 11% provide no magazine access. Among those libraries, limited budgets represent the dominant constraint.

Academic librarians see digital magazines supporting learning and current awareness.

- Eighty-eight percent agree that digital magazines complement academic resources, while 81% say they expose students to current topics and varied perspectives.
- Eighty-four percent identify at least one learning, current-awareness, or career-related student use. Classroom support leads at 58%.
- Seventy-five percent consider recreational reading at least moderately important, giving it a recognized but generally supporting place in collection strategy.

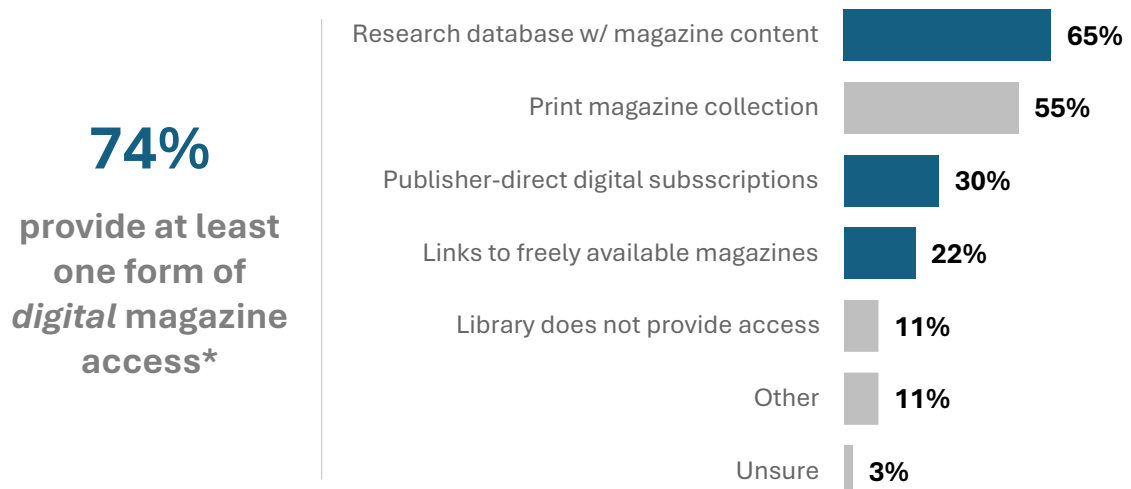
Student engagement depends on visibility and ease of use.

- Seventy-seven percent use a library-controlled digital discovery channel, yet 80% identify at least one barrier competing for student attention.
- Low awareness (45%) substantially outweighs title misalignment (8%), indicating that visibility is a larger concern than content fit.
- Price and licensing flexibility leads all service factors at 73%, while 87% prioritize flexible terms, ease of access, or both.

Detailed Analysis and Findings

Fig. 1 (n=148) How does your library currently provide access to popular magazines?

Libraries typically provide magazine access through a mix of formats.

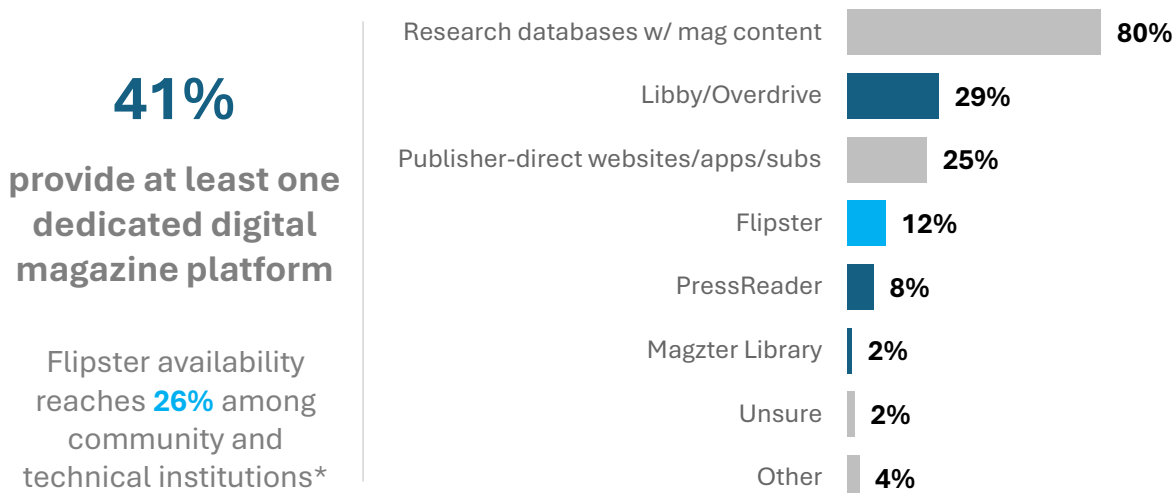


**Unduplicated count reporting at least one digital access method: a research database with magazine content, publisher-direct digital subscriptions, or links to freely available magazines. Multiple responses were allowed; percentages may exceed 100%. Results are unweighted.*

- **Fig. 1** Popular magazine access remains common across academic libraries: only 11% reported providing no current access.
- Research databases (65%) and print collections (55%) form the primary foundation, while publisher subscriptions and free online content extend the available mix.
- With 57% using two or more access methods, magazine availability is typically incorporated into a broader collection ecosystem rather than delivered through one source alone.
- Community and technical institutions reported particularly broad availability through research databases (75%) and print collections (69%), reflecting the varied information needs of their students.
- Among the 11% that do not provide access (16 responding libraries), limited budgets (81%) and low perceived student demand (56%) dominate, followed by competing collection priorities (31%), highlighting how resource constraints are a primary driver of gaps in access to these materials.

Fig. 2 (n=132) Which digital magazine platforms or services does your library currently make available?

Research databases provide the broadest foundation, while dedicated magazine platforms create additional access points.

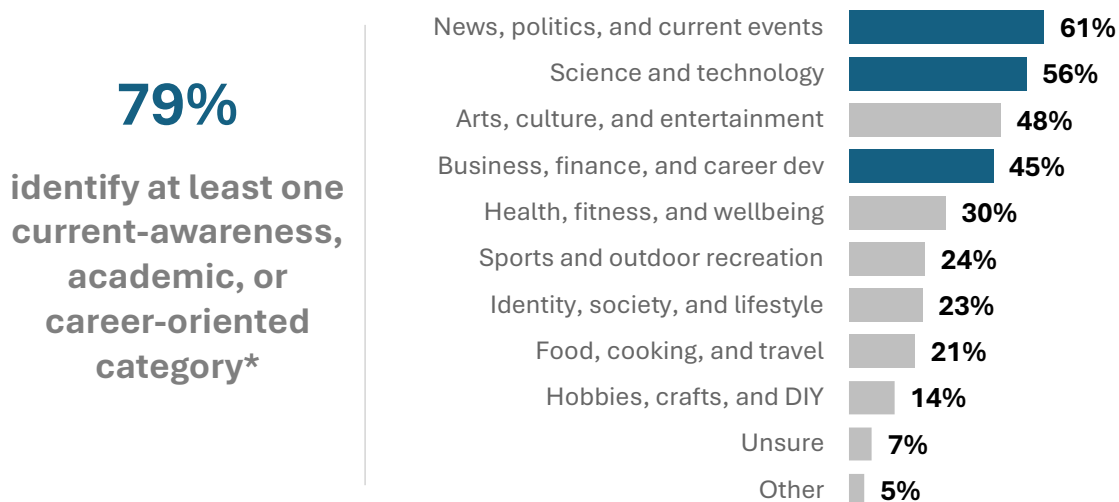


**Community/technical base: 35. Comparative availability was 6% at public universities and 5% at private institutions. Multiple responses allowed; percentages may total more than 100%. Results are unweighted.*

- **Fig. 2** Digital magazine access is well established: 95% reported at least one specific platform or service, led by research databases at 80%.
- Nearly half (46%) offer multiple services or service types, indicating that libraries commonly combine database content, dedicated platforms, and publisher-direct access.
- Dedicated reading platforms are available at 41% of responding libraries, giving students a magazine-focused experience alongside broader research resources.
- Flipster has its strongest reported presence among community and technical institutions (26%, versus approximately 5%–6% at public and private four-year institutions), suggesting particular relevance in settings serving diverse curricular and personal interests.

Fig. 3 (n=126) Which types of popular magazine content are most relevant to students at your institution?

Librarians associate magazine relevance most strongly with timely, informative, and professionally oriented content.

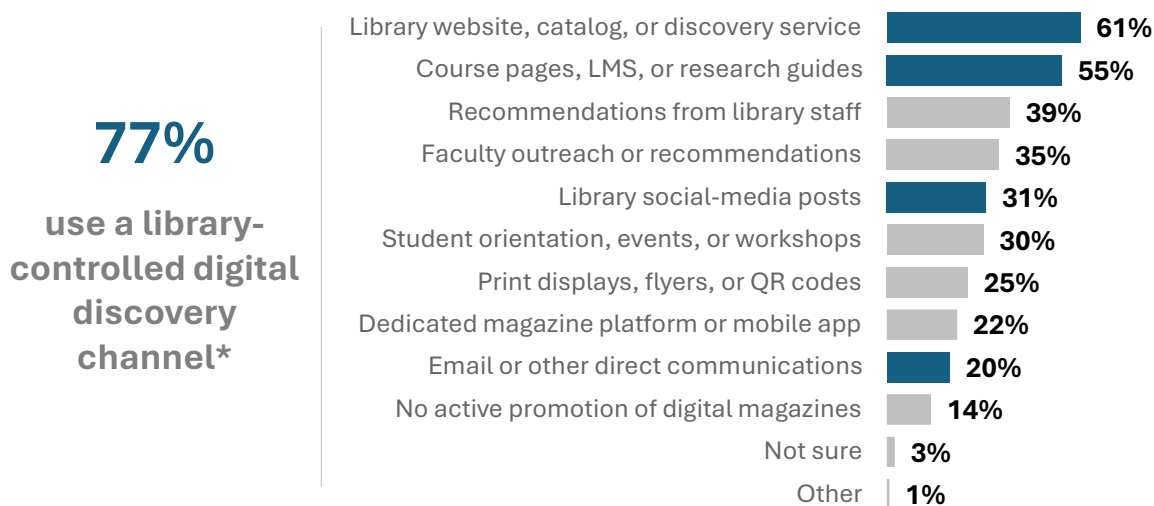


**Includes respondents selecting news, business/career, science/technology, or any combination of these categories. Respondents could select up to five answers; percentages may total more than 100%. Results are unweighted.*

- **Fig. 3** Magazine relevance is anchored in timely and informative subjects: news/current events (61%) and science/technology (56%) lead the content rankings.
- Nearly four in five respondents (79%) identified news, business/career, or science content, demonstrating a clear connection between magazines and students' academic or professional interests.
- At the same time, 60% selected content across both academic/career and personal-interest categories, placing magazines between formal research and students' everyday interests.
- Institutional emphasis varies: private institutions more frequently selected business/career content (58%), while community and technical institutions showed comparatively broader interest in arts/culture (57%) and hobbies/DIY (29%).

Fig. 4 (n=122) Which methods does your library currently use to help students discover library-provided digital magazines?

Library websites and course-related resources are the primary pathways to digital magazine discovery.

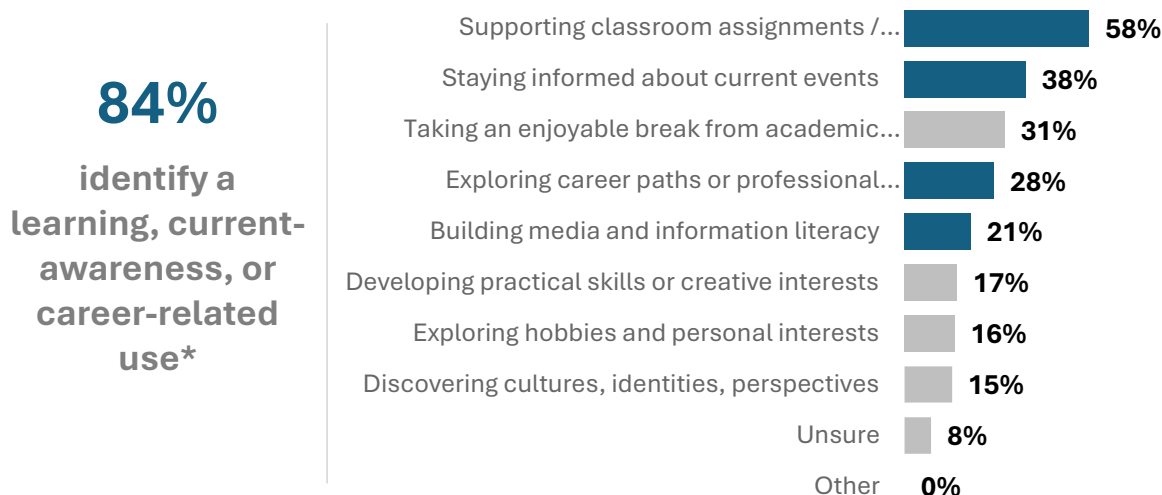


*Digital library channels include websites or catalogs, course resources, social media, and direct email communications. Multiple responses allowed; percentages may total more than 100%. Results are unweighted.

- **Fig. 4** Digital magazines are most often surfaced through channels already connected to academic work, including library websites (61%) and course pages, learning systems, or research guides (55%).
- Discovery also retains a substantial human component: 60% use librarian recommendations, faculty outreach, orientations, or related events.
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) use at least two discovery methods, showing that visibility is generally built through several library and campus touchpoints.
- Community and technical institutions reported especially frequent use of course resources (69%), physical displays (40%), and orientations or events (40%), reflecting a varied digital and in-person approach.

Fig. 5 (n=121) Which uses of digital magazines are most relevant for students at your institution?

Classroom and assignment support lead student use cases.



*Respondent-level net: 102 of 121 selected at least one highlighted use. Respondents selecting multiple highlighted uses are counted once.

- **Fig. 5** Classroom support is the leading individual use at 58%, while 38% associate magazines with helping students follow current events and social issues.
- The value is not exclusively academic. Nearly one-third (31%) selected an enjoyable break from academic work, and 45% identified uses spanning both academic and personal dimensions.
- Community and technical institutions were especially likely to cite classroom support (69%) and career exploration (37%), reinforcing the format's relevance to applied and workforce-oriented learning.

Fig. 6 (n=115) How much do you agree or disagree with each statement about digital magazines for college students?

Digital magazines receive the strongest ratings for academic support and current awareness.

Statement	Overall agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Complements academic resources with current perspectives	87.8%	35.7%	52.2%	9.6%	0.9%	0.0%	1.7%
Exposes students to current topics and varied perspectives	80.9%	27.8%	53.0%	11.3%	0.9%	2.6%	4.3%
Supports wellbeing through an enjoyable break	73.0%	24.3%	48.7%	17.4%	1.7%	3.5%	4.3%
Convenient access across devices and locations	72.2%	28.7%	43.5%	17.4%	4.3%	0.9%	5.2%
Helps students explore hobbies and personal interests	63.5%	23.5%	40.0%	26.1%	1.7%	2.6%	6.1%
Encourages regular recreational reading habits	63.5%	25.2%	38.3%	26.1%	2.6%	3.5%	4.3%

**Base: 115 respondents per statement. Overall combines Strongly Agree and Agree; rows are ranked by Overall agreement. Blue shading highlights levels of agreement for each response statement. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.*

- **Fig. 6** The strongest perceived value is the complementary nature of digital magazine access: 88% agree that digital magazines extend academic resources with accessible perspectives on current issues.
- That view is reinforced by the 81% who believe magazines expose students to current topics and varied perspectives; 77% agree with both academic-value statements.
- Convenience (72%) and wellbeing (73%) provide an additional layer of value by making approachable reading available across devices and outside more demanding academic work.
- Hobbies and regular recreational reading each receive 64% agreement. These benefits are meaningful, but less universal than the academic and current-awareness roles.

Fig. 7 (n=131) How important is supporting recreational reading within your library's current collection strategy? (Select one)

75% consider recreational reading at least moderately important.

	TOTAL	INSTITUTION TYPE			PRIMARY ROLE GROUP			
Importance rating	Overall n=131	Public university n=35	Private institution n=43	Community / technical n=36	Leadership n=32	Collections n=20	Reference n=42	Access / systems n=11**
Extremely important	18%	17%	9%	19%	31%	10%	14%	18%
Very important	26%	26%	23%	42%	13%	20%	26%	55%
Moderately important	31%	31%	37%	17%	25%	45%	36%	9%
Slightly important	17%	17%	21%	14%	19%	20%	17%	9%
Not at all important	7%	3%	9%	8%	9%	5%	5%	9%
Not sure	2%	6%	0%	0%	3%	0%	2%	0%

Community and technical institutions are **nearly twice as likely** as private institutions to rate recreational reading extremely or very important (61% vs. 33%)*

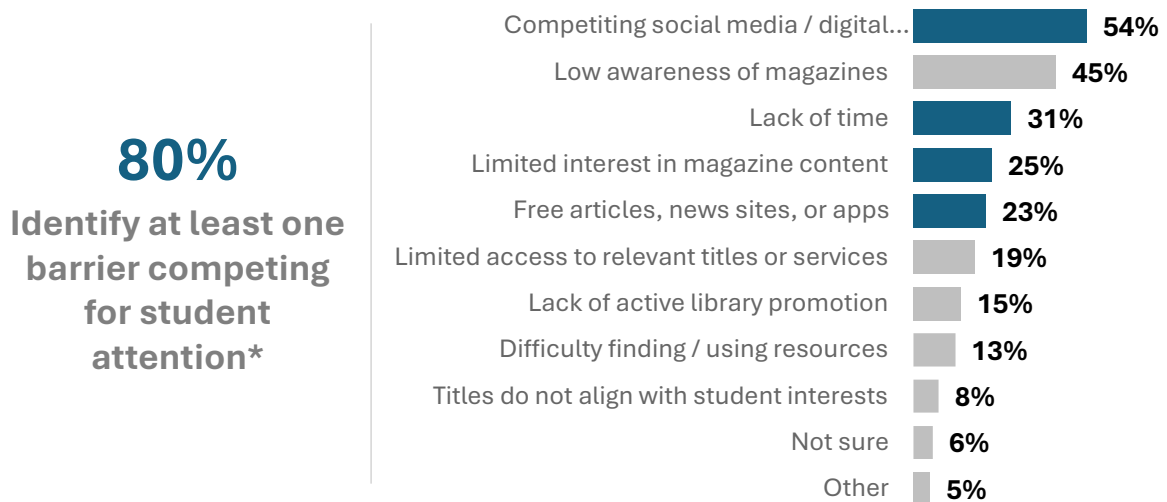
*Callout combines "Extremely important" and "Very important" responses within each institution group.

**Access/systems findings (n=11) are directional due to the small base. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

- **Fig. 7** Recreational reading has a recognized, though generally supporting, place in academic collection strategy. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) consider it at least moderately important, while 44% rate it extremely or very important.
- Institutional differences reflect the degree of emphasis more than whether recreational reading has value. At least 70% across public, private, and community or technical institutions consider it moderately important or higher, but extremely or very important ratings range from 33% at private institutions to 61% at community and technical institutions.
- Collections respondents most often place recreational reading in the middle of the priority scale. Nearly half (45%) rate it moderately important, while 30% assign it one of the two highest ratings. Leadership and reference respondents show somewhat stronger top-tier support at 44% and 40%, respectively.

Fig. 8 (n=114) What most limits student use of library-provided magazines at your institution?
(Select three)

Student attention and awareness are the leading barriers to magazine use.

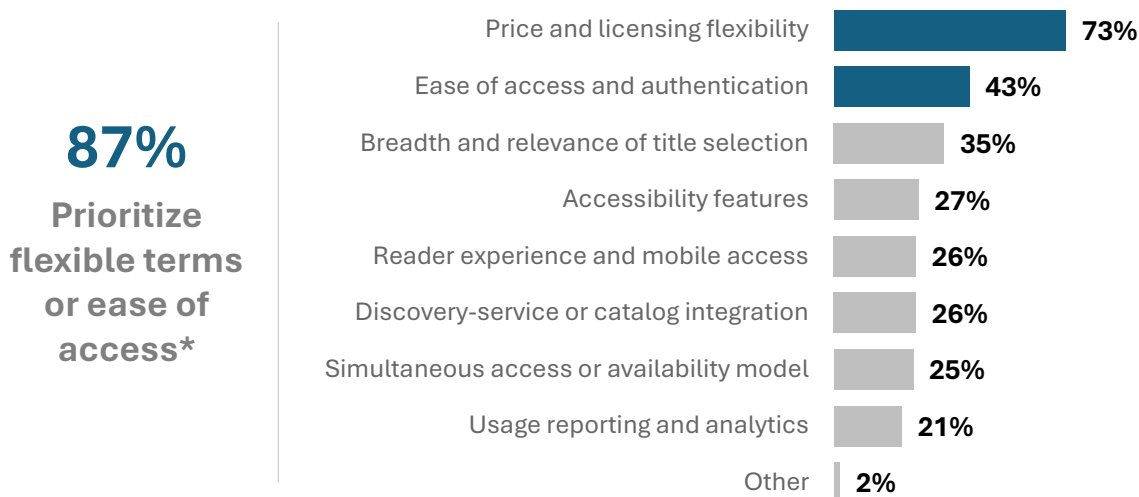


*The 80% is a respondent-level net (91 of 114). Respondents selecting multiple highlighted barriers are counted once.

- **Fig. 8** The dominant challenge occurs before students engage deeply with magazine content. Three-quarters (75%) cite digital competition, low awareness, or both—placing the primary barrier at the point of gaining attention.
- Competition for student attention is often layered rather than singular. While 80% identify at least one attention-related barrier, 40% selected two or more, suggesting that several competing behaviors frequently constrain use simultaneously.
- Low awareness (45%) is three times as common as lack of active library promotion (15%). This suggests that visibility is not reducible to promotion alone; magazines may still struggle to surface within students' everyday information habits.
- Structural concerns are less prominent: only 8% cite title misalignment, 13% difficulty finding or using resources, and 19% limited access. Overall, limited use appears more closely connected to attention and discovery than to a fundamental shortcoming in the available offering.

Fig. 9 (n=113) When evaluating a digital magazine service, which factors matter most to your library? (Select three)

Price and licensing flexibility leads the next-ranked factor by 30 points.

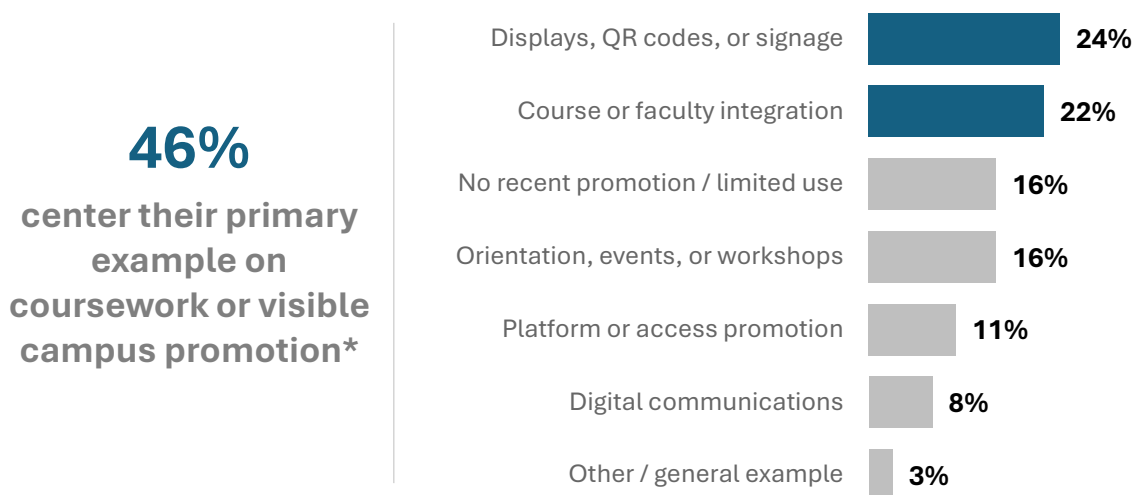


*Respondent-level net: 98 of 113 selected price and licensing flexibility, ease of access and authentication, or both. Respondents selecting both are counted once.

- **Fig. 9** Flexible terms are the clearest shared priority: 73% select price and licensing flexibility, 30 points more than any other factor. The service model therefore carries substantial weight alongside the content itself.
- When price/licensing flexibility and ease of access are considered together, 87% prioritize at least one, indicating that libraries evaluate both institutional feasibility and the student path into the service.
- Flexibility does not mean price alone. Sixty-eight percent pair price/licensing with another consideration, suggesting that favorable terms act as an entry requirement before libraries assess broader user and institutional fit.
- The remaining factors cluster between 21% and 35%, with no dominant second tier. Beyond flexible terms and access, priorities appear more institution-specific, spanning content relevance, accessibility, mobile use, integration, availability, and analytics.

Fig. 10 (n=37) Please briefly describe any successful ways digital magazines have been promoted or actively used by students on your campus. (Optional)

Successful examples most often connect magazines to coursework or visible campus touchpoints.



*37 respondents represent 25% of the total sample. Each response was assigned one primary theme; secondary tactics mentioned within comments are not reflected in the bars. Findings are directional.

- **Fig. 10** The most common examples place digital magazines within an existing point of student contact. Displays and QR codes (24%) and course or faculty integration (22%) collectively account for 46% of the primary themes.
- Course-linked examples connect magazines to assignments, library instruction, language learning, and subject-specific exploration. These comments suggest that use is more likely when magazines are presented for a recognizable academic purpose.
- Displays and QR codes serve as a bridge between physical library spaces and digital collections. Orientation sessions, events, email, newsletters, and platform links often appear as supporting elements within broader, multi-channel efforts.
- Promotional activity is uneven: 16% reported no recent promotion or limited use. Given the small, self-selected response base, these findings illustrate approaches libraries have tried rather than establish which tactics are most effective.

Digital magazines support academic goals when relevant content is visible and easy to access.

ACADEMIC RELEVANCE

88%

agree that digital magazines complement academic resources with perspectives on current issues.

STUDENT ATTENTION

80%

identify at least one attention-related barrier limiting student use.

SERVICE FLEXIBILITY

87%

prioritize price and licensing flexibility, ease of access, or both when evaluating digital magazine services.

- Digital magazines occupy a credible supporting role within academic library collections. Librarians see their clearest value in complementing academic resources and connecting students with current topics, while recreational reading and personal interests extend that value beyond coursework.
- Stronger student use depends on making this content visible at the point of need. Course integration and prominent campus touchpoints offer practical ways to surface magazines, while convenient access and flexible pricing and licensing help libraries sustain availability.

Appendix

Which one of the following best describes your institution?*

- ☐ Community College
- ☐ Faith-based College-University
- ☐ For-profit College
- ☐ Graduate/Professional School (law, medicine, business)
- ☐ Private University
- ☐ Private Liberal Arts College
- ☐ Public University
- ☐ Research University
- ☐ Technical/Vocational College
- ☐ Tribal College/University
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

Which best describes your current role?*

- ☐ Access Services/Circulation Librarian
- ☐ Archivist/Special Collections Librarian
- ☐ Assistant University Librarian
- ☐ Cataloguing/Metadata Librarian
- ☐ Data Services Librarian
- ☐ Department Head/Manager/Administrator
- ☐ Electronic Resource Librarian
- ☐ Head of Acquisitions/Collections
- ☐ Information Literacy Librarian
- ☐ Instruction Coordinator Librarian
- ☐ Library Director
- ☐ Outreach/Engagement Librarian
- ☐ Reference and Research Librarian
- ☐ Subject Specialist/Liaison Librarian
- ☐ Systems/Technology Librarian
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

How does your library currently provide access to popular magazines? (Select all that apply.) *

- ☐ Print magazine collection
- ☐ Research database that includes magazine content
- ☐ Individual digital subscriptions purchased directly from publishers
- ☐ Links to freely available magazine content
- ☐ Our library does not currently provide access to popular magazines
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

Which digital magazine platforms or services does your library currently make available? (Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Flipster
- ☐ Libby / OverDrive
- ☐ Magzter Library
- ☐ PressReader
- ☐ Publisher-direct websites, apps, or title-specific digital subscriptions
- ☐ Research database that includes magazine content (i.e., EBSCOhost, Gale, or ProQuest)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other platform or service (please specify):: _____

Based on usage, requests, or your professional judgment, which types of popular magazine content are most relevant to students at your institution? (Select up to five.)*

- ☐ Arts, culture, and entertainment
- ☐ News, politics, and current events
- ☐ Business, finance, and career development
- ☐ Science and technology
- ☐ Health, fitness, and wellbeing
- ☐ Identity, society, and lifestyle
- ☐ Sports and outdoor recreation
- ☐ Food, cooking, and travel
- ☐ Hobbies, crafts, and do-it-yourself interests
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

Which methods does your library currently use to help students discover library-provided digital magazines? (Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Library website, catalog, or discovery service
- ☐ Dedicated digital magazine platform or mobile app
- ☐ Recommendations from library staff
- ☐ Faculty outreach or recommendations
- ☐ Course pages, learning management system, or library research guides
- ☐ Email newsletters or other direct communications
- ☐ Library social-media posts
- ☐ Print displays, flyers, or QR-code promotions
- ☐ Student orientation, events, or workshops
- ☐ We do not actively promote digital magazines
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

Which uses of digital magazines are most relevant for students at your institution? (Select up to three.)*

- ☐ Exploring hobbies and personal interests
- ☐ Staying informed about current events and social issues
- ☐ Taking an enjoyable break from academic work
- ☐ Supporting classroom assignments or course discussions
- ☐ Building media and information literacy
- ☐ Exploring career paths or professional interests
- ☐ Discovering cultures, identities, and perspectives
- ☐ Developing practical skills or creative interests
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

Based on your experience or professional judgment, how much do you agree or disagree with each statement about digital magazines for college students? (Select one response in each row.

--Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / Unsure--

- ☐ They make popular magazine content convenient to access across devices and locations.
- ☐ They help students explore hobbies and personal interests.
- ☐ They expose students to current topics and a range of perspectives.
- ☐ They encourage more regular recreational reading habits.
- ☐ They support student wellbeing by offering an enjoyable break from academic demands.
- ☐ Digital magazines complement academic resources by giving students accessible perspectives on current topics and issues.

How important is supporting recreational reading within your library's current collection strategy? (Select one.)*

- ☐ Extremely important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Not sure

Why does your library not currently provide access to popular magazines? (Select up to three)*

- ☐ Limited budget
- ☐ Low perceived student demand
- ☐ Other collection priorities
- ☐ Lack of staff capacity
- ☐ Limited awareness of available services
- ☐ Licensing or procurement complexity
- ☐ Preference for print magazines
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

What most limits student use of library-provided magazines at your institution? (Select up to three.)*

- ☐ Lack of time
- ☐ Low awareness of magazines available through the library
- ☐ Competition from social media and other digital entertainment
- ☐ Preference for free online articles, news sites, or apps
- ☐ Difficulty finding, signing in to, or using library magazine resources
- ☐ Available titles do not align with student interests
- ☐ Lack of active promotion by the library
- ☐ Limited access to relevant titles or services
- ☐ Limited interest in magazine content
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

When evaluating a digital magazine service, which factors matter most to your library? (Select up to three.)*

- ☐ Breadth and relevance of title selection
- ☐ Price and licensing flexibility
- ☐ Ease of access and authentication
- ☐ Reader experience and mobile access
- ☐ Accessibility features
- ☐ Usage reporting and analytics
- ☐ Discovery-service or catalog integration
- ☐ Simultaneous access or availability model
- ☐ Other - Write In: _____

Please briefly describe any successful ways digital magazines have been promoted or actively used by students on your campus.

(Optional)

Thank You!