

The Impact of the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) on Scientific Research

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Introduction

BHL Goal:

"The Biodiversity Heritage Library improves research methodology by collaboratively making biodiversity literature openly available to the world as part of a global biodiversity community." (www.biodiversitylibrary.org)

Research Questions

- How are people, scientists in particular, using the BHL?
- What impact, if any, does layperson use of the BHL have on science?

Methods

Sample Collection:

The BHL has maintained a blog covering many areas of interest to librarians and patrons. They highlight exhibits, Twitter campaigns, Flickr collections and so forth.

- One group identified by the blog is a series labeled "BHL Users".

Selection and Exclusion Criteria

The blog series "BHL Users" had 73 blogs at time of collection.

- Blogs were included if they identified specific users.
- Blogs were excluded if they were video only (1) or highlighting side-projects with similarity to the BHL but no evidence of BHL utilization.
- After removal of unrelated blogs a total of 67 Blogs remained.

"By my own estimate, less than half the world's species of birds have been represented by a stable and consistent name over the last hundred years or so. In some cases, such as with Puffinus iherminieri, a single scientific name has been used to describe up to 18 different concepts, which really only share being represented by a common type specimen."

"I am greatly indebted to BHL. I honestly do not know if my thesis project would have been possible without it...I'm happy to know that there are resources and people out there that are committed to digitizing and making available scientific literature, old and new."

Methods Continued

Content Analysis

Questions as Initial Primary Categories

The blog initially contained defined questions, however in reading through the blogs it became clear that these questions were still being asked, thus they became the initial categories.

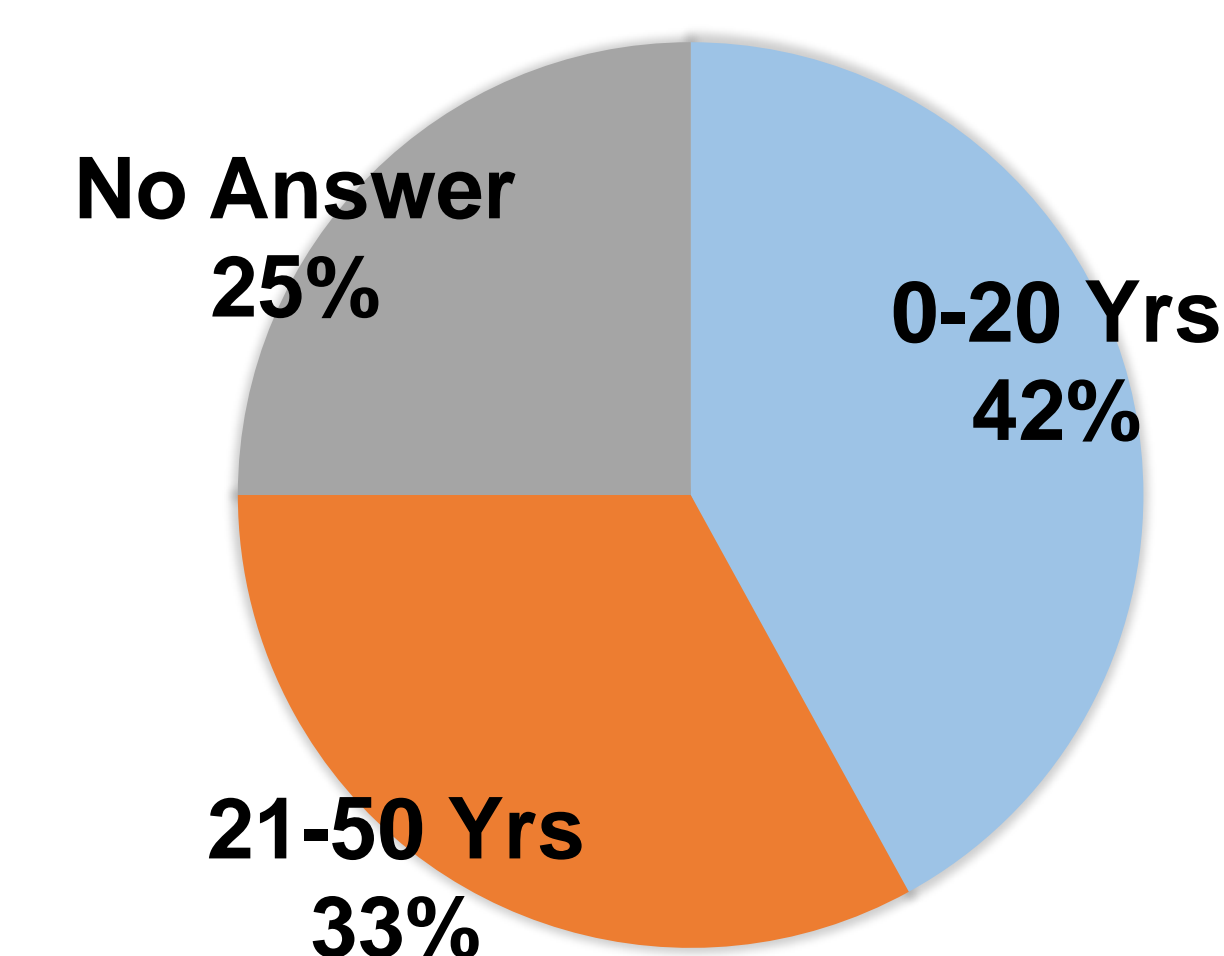
1. What is your title and institutional affiliation?
2. How long have you been in your field of study?
3. What is your opinion of BHL and how has it impacted your research?
4. How often do you use BHL?
5. How do you usually use BHL?
6. What are your favorite features/services on BHL?
7. If you could change one thing about BHL, what would it be?
8. What is your favorite title in BHL?

Findings

User Breakdown:

- 48 Scientists (graduate students or professionals)
- 8 Science Librarians
- 5 Historians
- 5 Amateur Scientists
- 1 Artist

Time in Area of Study



Usage Frequency

- 50% used the BHL at least once a month on a regular basis.
- 25% would use it daily or weekly when in the middle of a project.

Common Usage

- 57% Downloaded pdfs
- 30% Downloaded custom pdfs
- 21% Read online
- 16% Downloaded Images.

Favorite Features:

- 76% said historic literature
- 49% said original literature.
- 25% said searching by taxonomic name.

Future Needs:

- 30% Requested more content
- 12% want full-text searching.

Impact

Science Communication

- 46% Specifically noted the importance of access to these materials internationally.
- 27% Noted their lack of library access or availability of materials.
- 22% Mentioned the importance of the open nature of BHL.
- 16% Mentioned a specific aspect of the BHL in the democratization of science.

Product Creation and Development from BHL Data

- 10 of the blogs indicated a scholarly publication was published due to information found in the BHL.
- 12 Open Access websites were created with BHL Data, examples include:

AviBase	FAUNA Paraguay's Library	Opuntiads Web
BioStor	FreshGEN	Tarantupedia
Encyclopedia of Life (EOL)	Hymenoptera Anatomy Ontology (HAO)	WoRMS

- 1 interviewee convinced 7 countries to waive copyright and share journals published in their countries.

Now What?

How do we integrate these types of libraries and resources more effectively in our catalogs?
How do we do our part to market these resources to the public?