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As information and research materials move from printed to electronic venues, the provision of academic library services also must change in order to meet the demands of changing user needs. In order to further study these trends in the U.S. and Canada's largest academic and research libraries, the authors conducted a survey of the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) members during May and June, 2011 to investigate whether and how ARL libraries have reconfigured their staffed service delivery points and any branches that report to the main library. The survey enjoyed a 47% response rate and became the basis for the publication, SPEC Kit 327: Reconfiguring Service Delivery (ARL, December 2011).

In investigating recent trends in service reconfigurations, this research focused on the changes that occurred during the last three years and included the driving factors behind the changes, the impact that such changes had on library personnel, opportunities for user participation in the projects, the associated benefits and challenges, and future plans for anticipated additions, closures, consolidations, and other reconfigurations during the next three years. Philosophical changes appeared to be the most important drivers for service delivery reconfigurations, followed by user demands. Interestingly, respondents noted that a change in service philosophy often accompanied a physical change such as the consolidation of a service desk or the creation of an information commons, emphasizing the new method in which the service is provided. Overall, this research shows how libraries are responding to provide the materials and services their constituents require.

Driving Factors for Change in Service Delivery

User requirements are a critical factor in determining service reconfigurations. Libraries most frequently involved users in implementation of changes.

Impact of Changes in Service Delivery
On Different Staff Types

Along with users, library staff at all levels are affected by changes in service configurations.

User Involvement in Service Reconfiguration