

Thinking about Middle
Eastern Studies
Librarianship in the digital
age



Yasmin Faghihi

Cambridge University Libraries

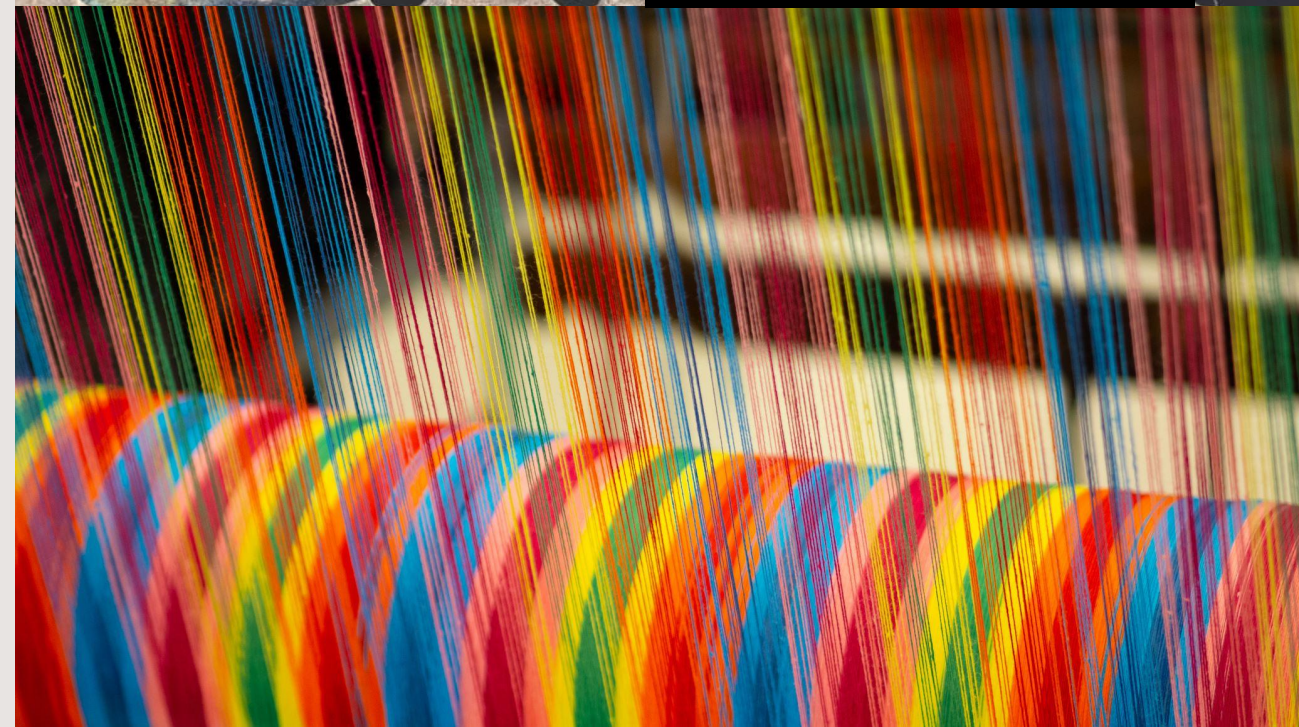
&

Lydia Wright

Bodleian Libraries

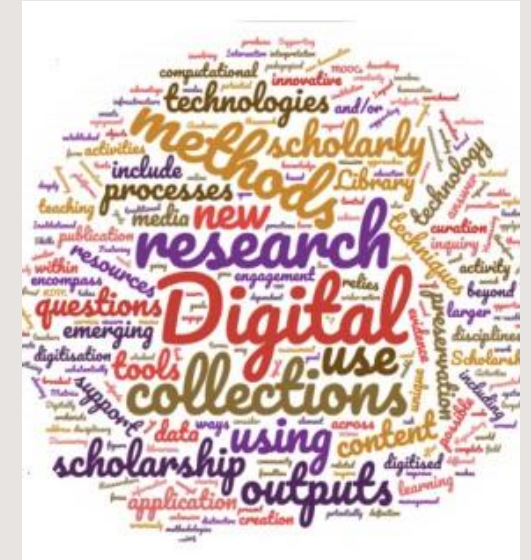


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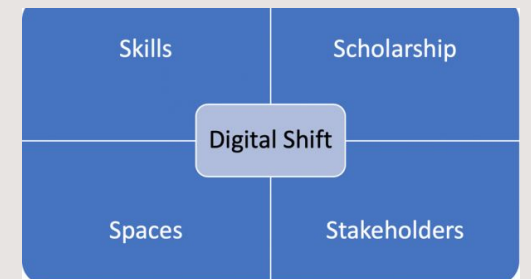


COVID and the The digital shift

- Changing nature of research collections
- Workspaces
- Collecting policies & discoverability
- Institutional collaboration



RLUK Research Libraries UK



ELECTRONIC COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

EJOURNALS & ERESOURCES : NEWS, ADVICE AND UPDATES ON NEW CONTENT FROM THE
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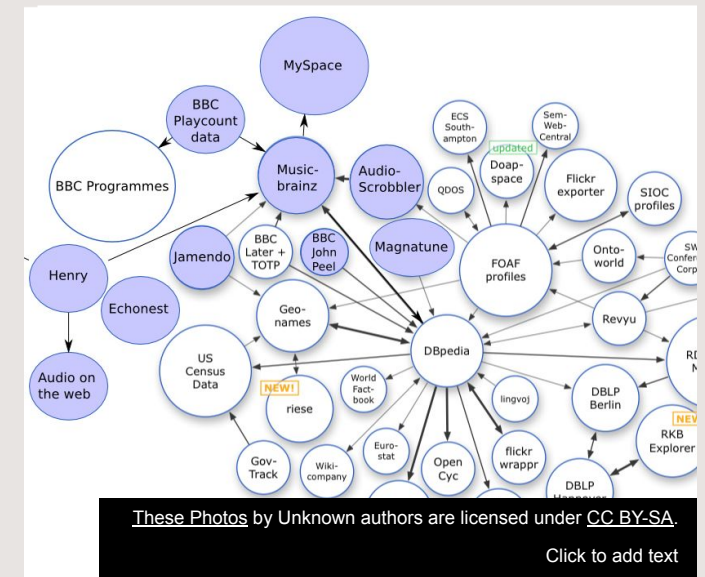
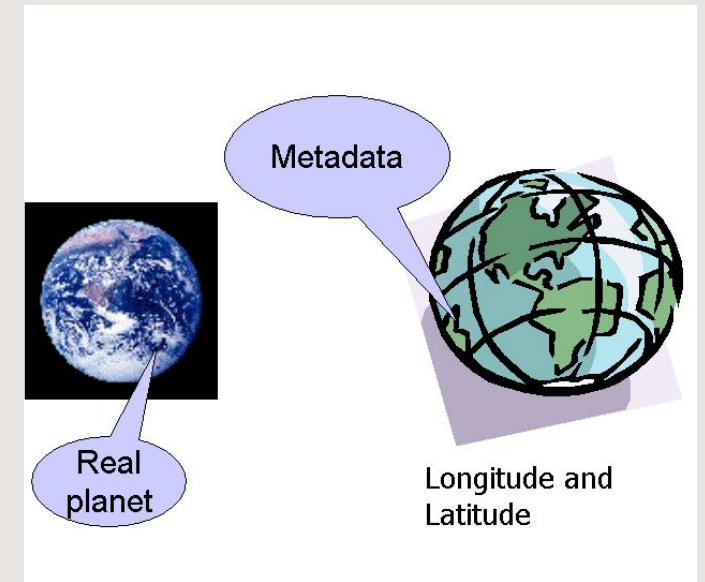
[20th century history](#) [African studies](#) [agriculture](#) [American](#)

Digital Humanities and Librarianship a luxury pet subject?

What do we know about

- Meta-data?
- Mark-up language?
- Linked Open Data?
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) ?

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC  
<html xmlns="http://www.w3  
<head><title>XYZ</title>  
</head>  
<body>  
<p>  
voluptatem accusantium do  
totam rem aperiam eaque  
</p>  
</body>  
</html>
```



Openness

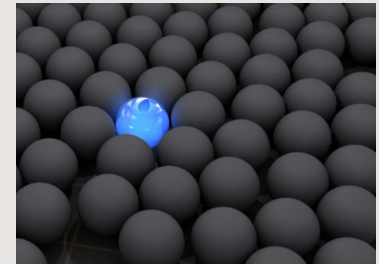
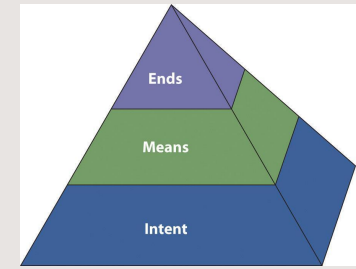
-Is Librarianship mirroring research in its move towards open scholarship?

-Are we gatekeepers or drivers?

Collaboration

Transparency

Ethics





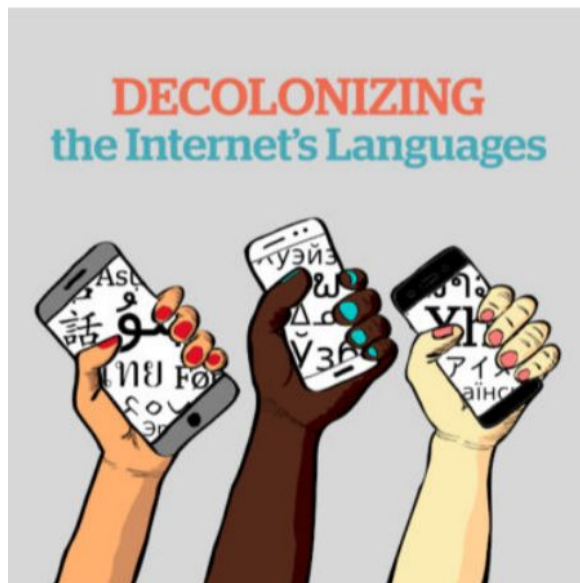
Middle Eastern vernacular resources in focus: The digital divide

- e-Resource imbalance in “niche areas”(mainly print publication from the Middle East) - does it matter?
- The context of the global agenda of decolonization in higher education + ethical duty of equity, diversity and inclusion.



How might the digital divide affect decolonization efforts?

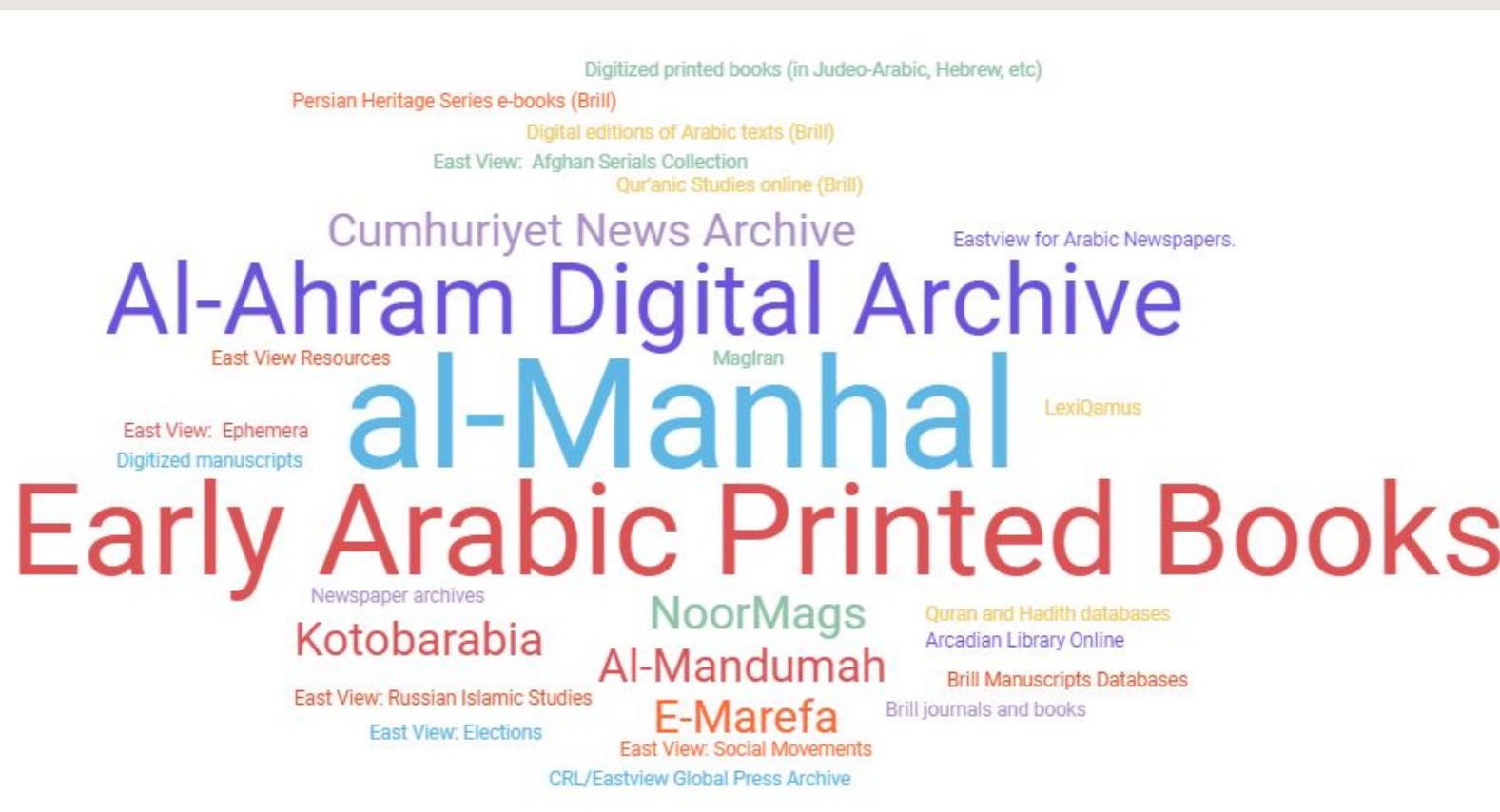
- Fewer ME vernacular materials available to purchase digitally resulting in inequality of access and discrepancy in functionality of materials
- Fewer ME vernacular materials purchased in print because of print institutional budget cuts and institutional funds being prioritised for e-materials



"Decolonizing the Internet" initiative
by Whose Knowledge?

Collecting existing digital content in Middle Eastern languages

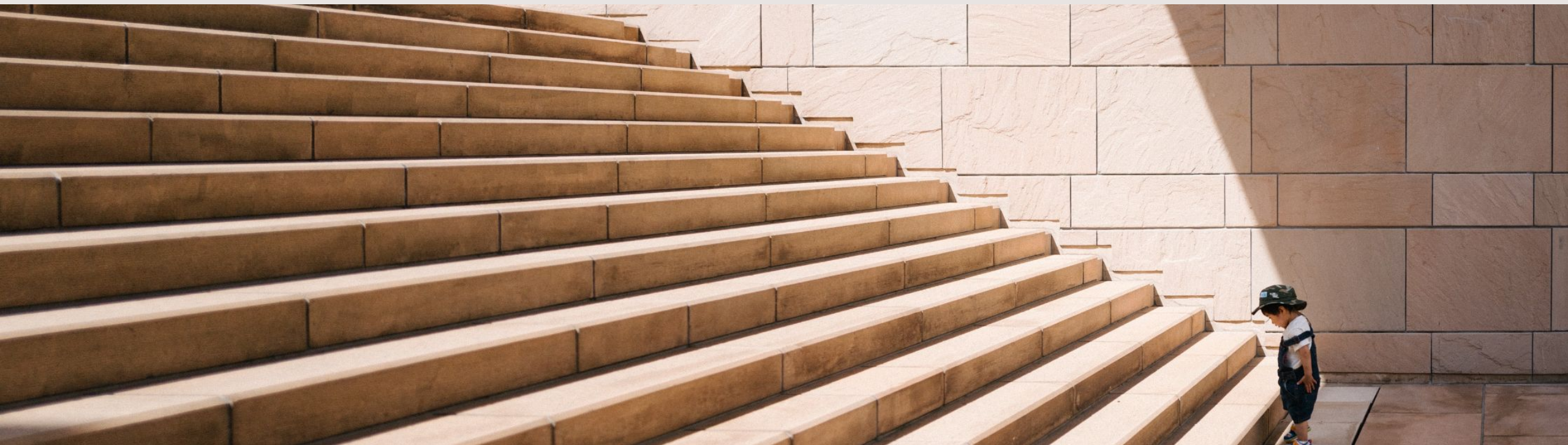
Digital divide - A lack of the digital or an issue of discoverability and access?



Obstacles & Challenges

- Lack of availability
- Lack of discoverability
- Commercialisation
- Licencing terms & conditions, piracy, copyright issues
- Digital preservation

Photo by [Haneen Krimly](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Collecting freely available digital content

Do we Middle East Librarians have a role in collecting, preserving and aiding discoverability of freely available digital content (i.e born-digital, digitisations, open access publications and data, blogs/websites/social media)?

If yes, how?

- LibGuides
- Addition of resources to catalogues/ILS

Arabic Comic Books

This guide is a starting point for finding information on comic books and graphic novels in the Arab world. The guide was created in support of Mu'taz and Rada Sawwaf Arabic Comics Initiative at the American University of Beirut.

Home

Library Resources

History & Theory

Online Resources

Cartoonists & Illustrators

Learning & Teaching

Online Resources

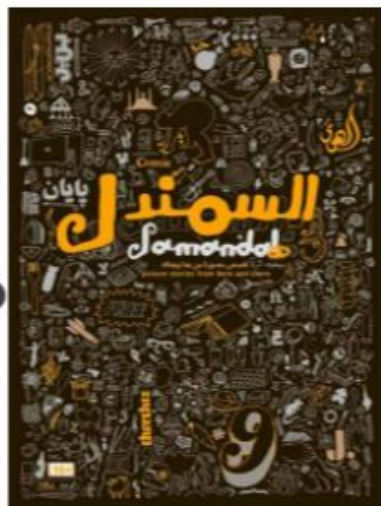
This page links to a selective list of *Online Comic Books, Children's Comic Books, Festivals, Awards, Grants, etc., Graphic Novels, Projects and Theses, Social Media, Blogs, Surveys and Videos.*

Online Comic Books

Samandal: picture stories from here and there. Read the following issues of Samandal Comics online: [Samandal issue2](#); and [Samandal issue3](#)

- **Malaak** a webcomic featuring Lebanon's superhero.
- **TokTok** is different from traditional comic books. It's a monthly review that aims to produce a bustling strips. [The Making of TokTok](#) (short video).
- **Tosh Fesh** is a series of books published by Mutaz Sawwaf dedicated to caricature artists in the Arab world.
- **The 99** - Superhero Comic Books from the Arab World. **The 99** is created by *Naif Al-Mutawa* and published by *Dark Horse Comics*. The 99 Characters are *Noora The Light, Bari The Healer, Jabbar The Powerful, etc.*

Selected Resources



Festivals, Awards, Grants, etc.

- **ADMAF - International Cartoon & Comic Strip Festival:** Awards are given for 'Best Scenario' and 'Best Artist'.
- **ADMAF Initiatives: select Grants**
- **Algerian International Comics Festival: FIBDA:** Competitions: Young talents and Professional.
- **Arab Comic Arts:** a panel discussion hosted by the Lebanese American University.
- **Arab Comics: 90 Years of Popular Visual Culture:** Symposium hosted by the Middle East Studies Center.

Views from the Academic and Professional Community



WHAT OUR
READERS (FACULTY
& STUDENTS) WANT



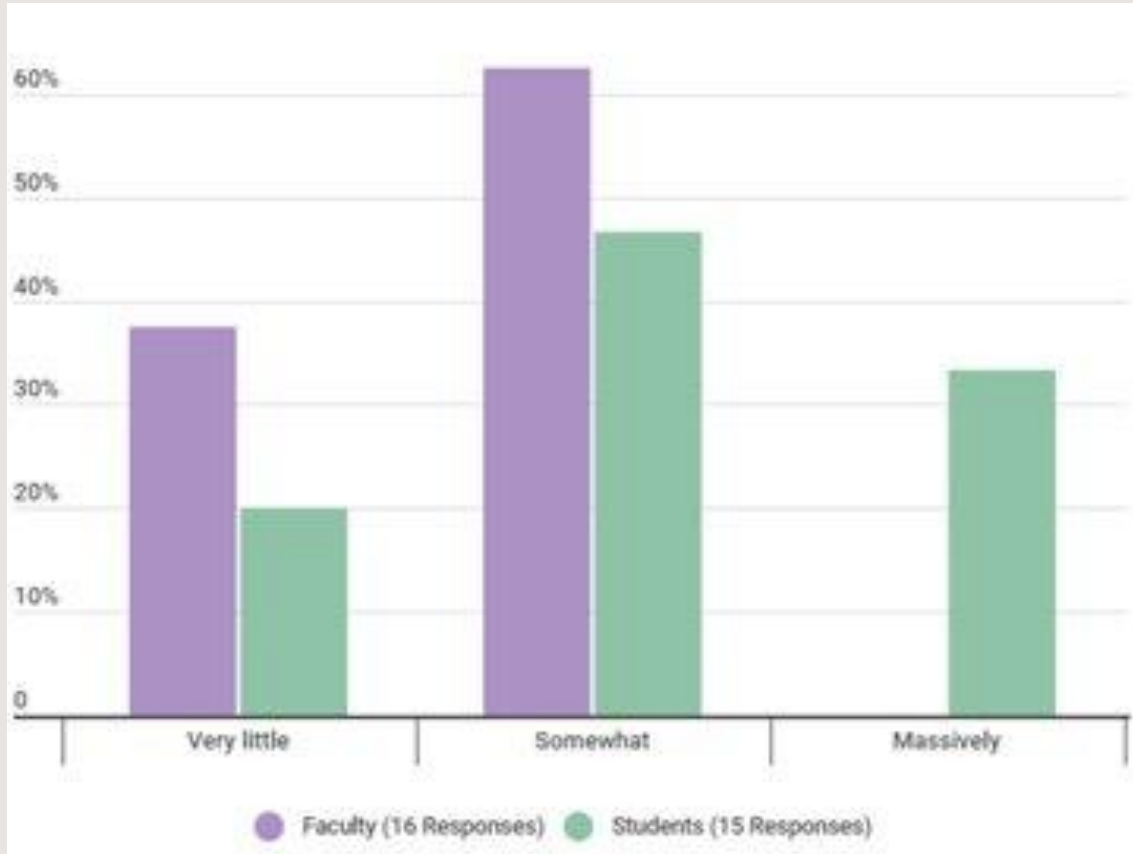
WHAT THE
LIBRARIANS SAY



WHAT OUR
VENDORS THINK

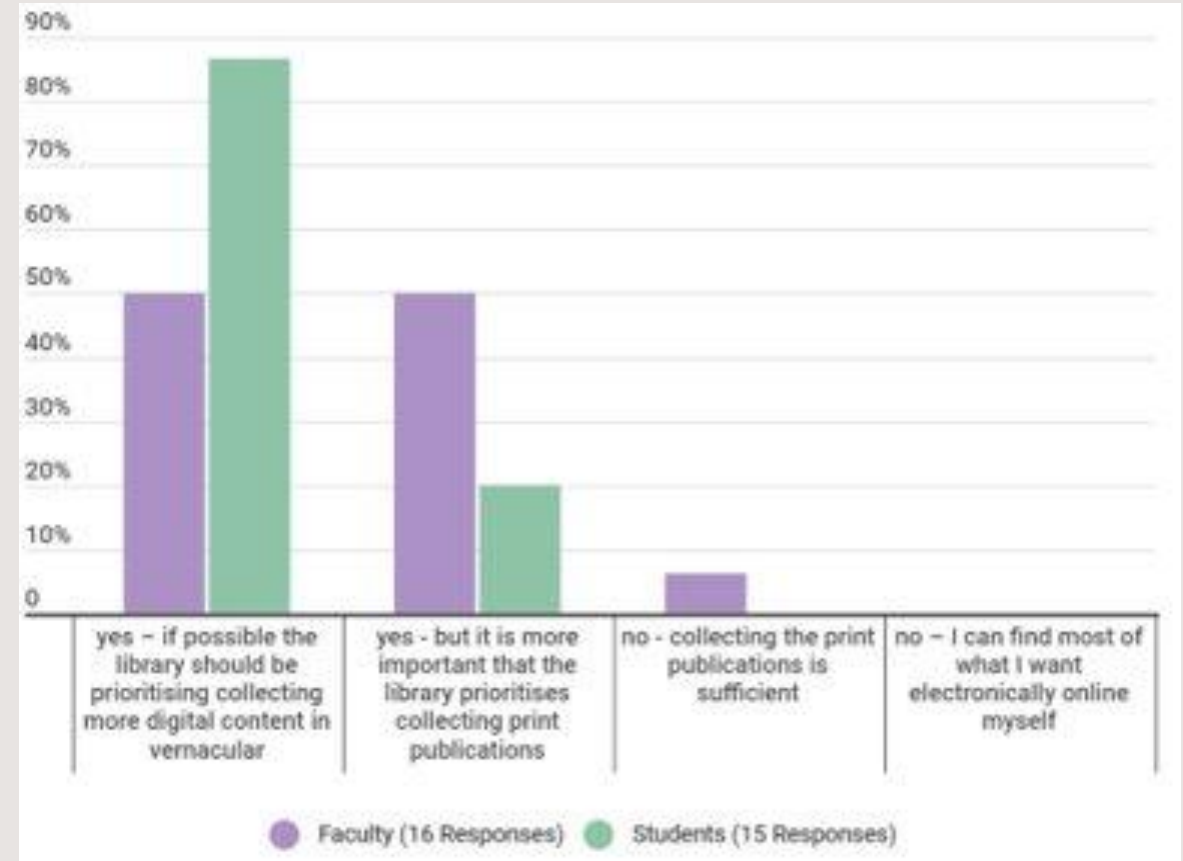
Faculty and Student Survey Results

Q.1



Q.1: How much did the temporary loss of access to the library's physical collections in vernacular languages during lockdown impact your work?

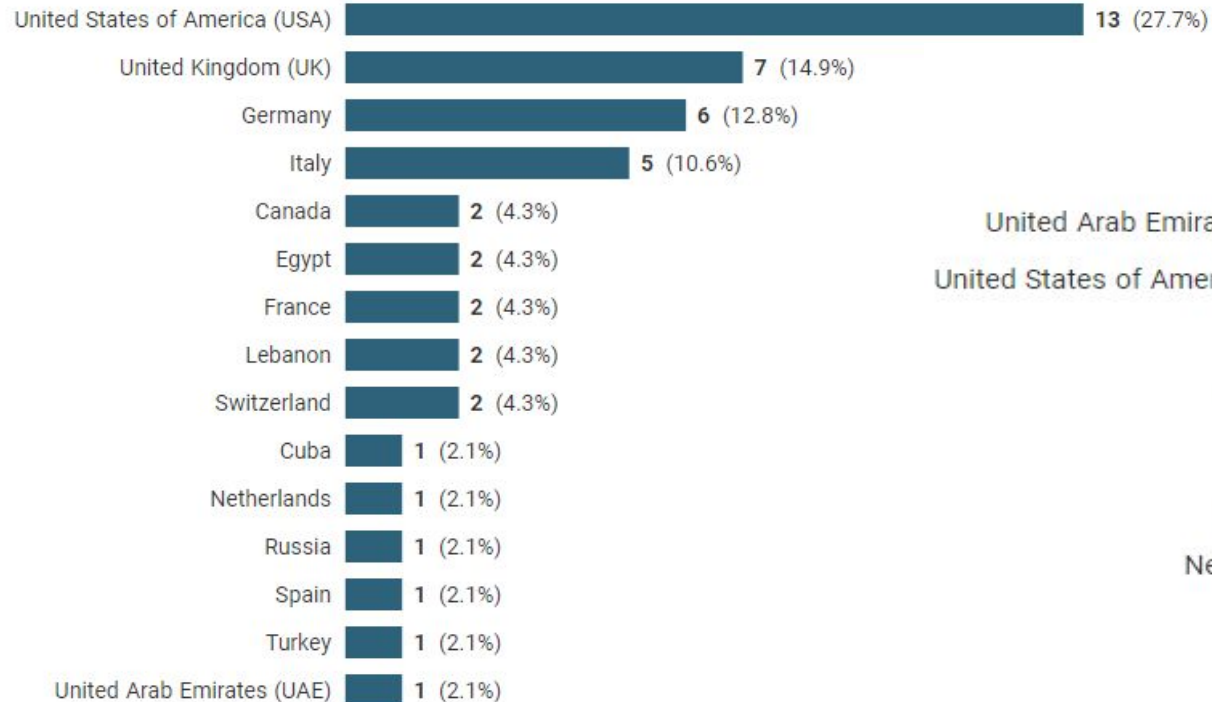
Q.2



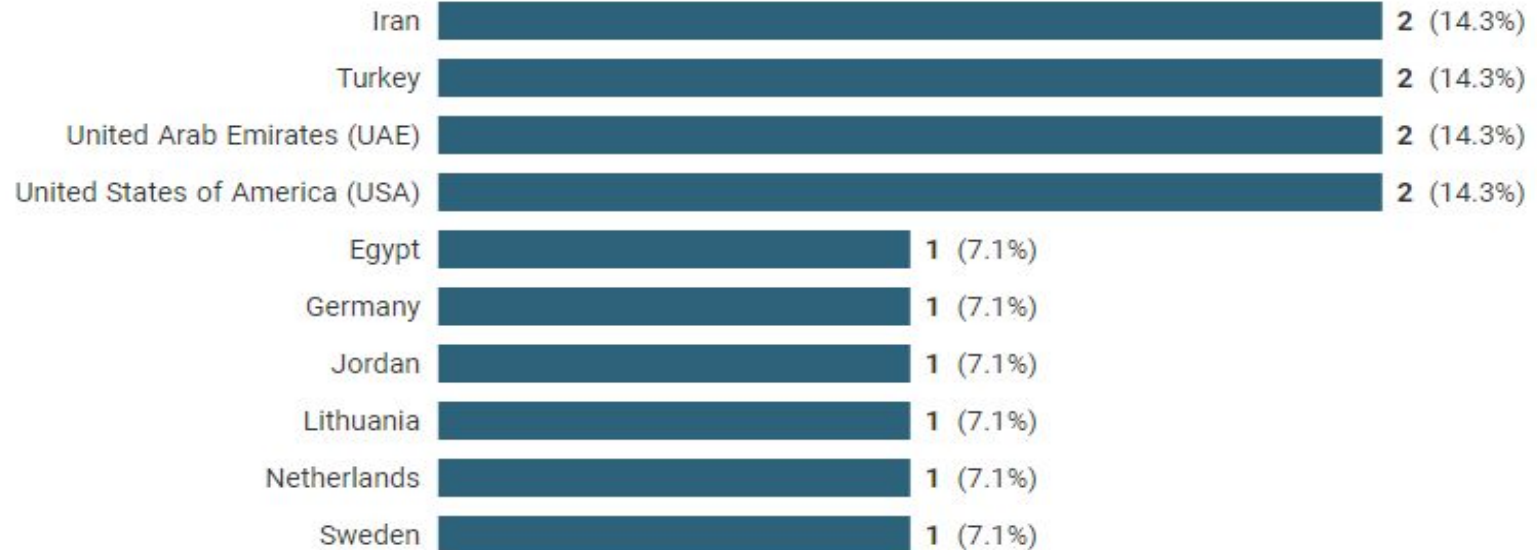
Q.2: The library faces several obstacles to acquiring e-resources and e-books in vernacular languages. Would you wish to see the library collect more e-resources and e-books for vernacular languages in the future if this were possible?

Vendor and Library Survey Results

Countries Represented



Libraries (47 Responses)

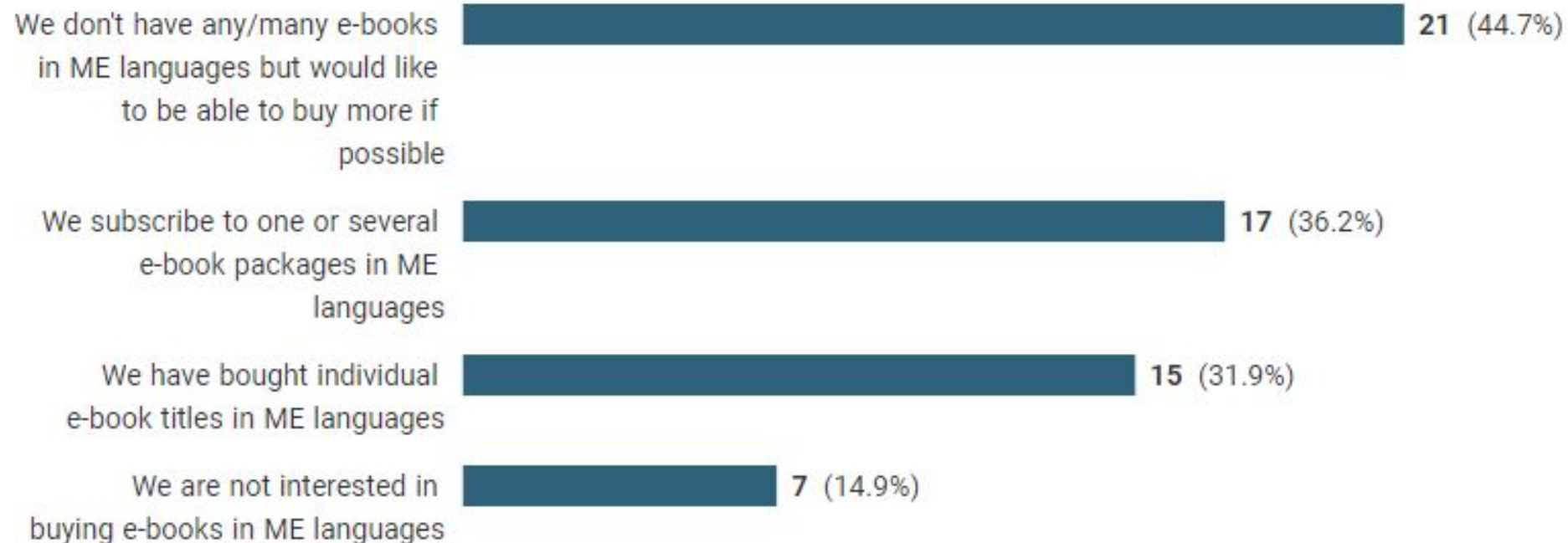


Vendors (14 Responses)

E-BOOKS

In the survey we asked
Librarians:

Which of these statements is most applicable to your library/institution? (Choose all that apply)



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

E-BOOKS: Obstacles

What Libraries say:

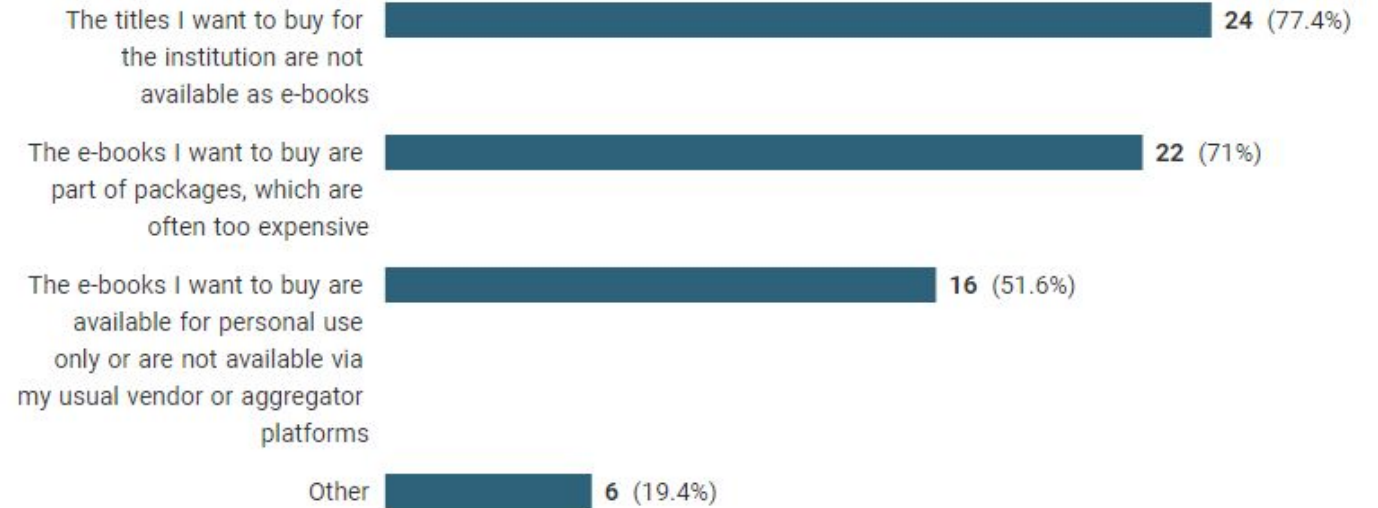
Librarians - Have you faced any obstacles in acquiring ebooks in ME languages for your institution?

80% said YES, 20% said NO

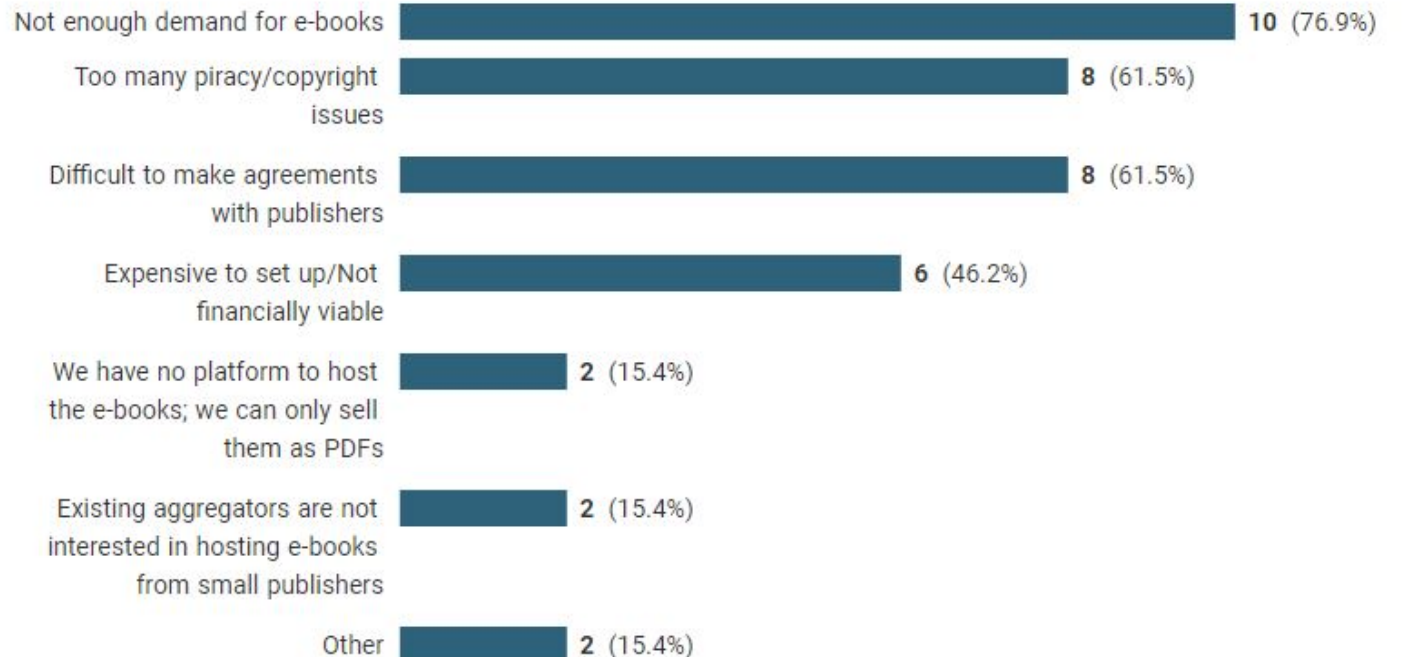
What Vendors say:

Vendors - obstacles have you faced / would you face when selling ebooks to institutions?

What do you think are the main obstacles your institution faces to acquiring ebooks in ME languages? (Tick all that apply)



What obstacles do you face, or would you face, if trying to sell e-books to institutions? (Please select all that apply)



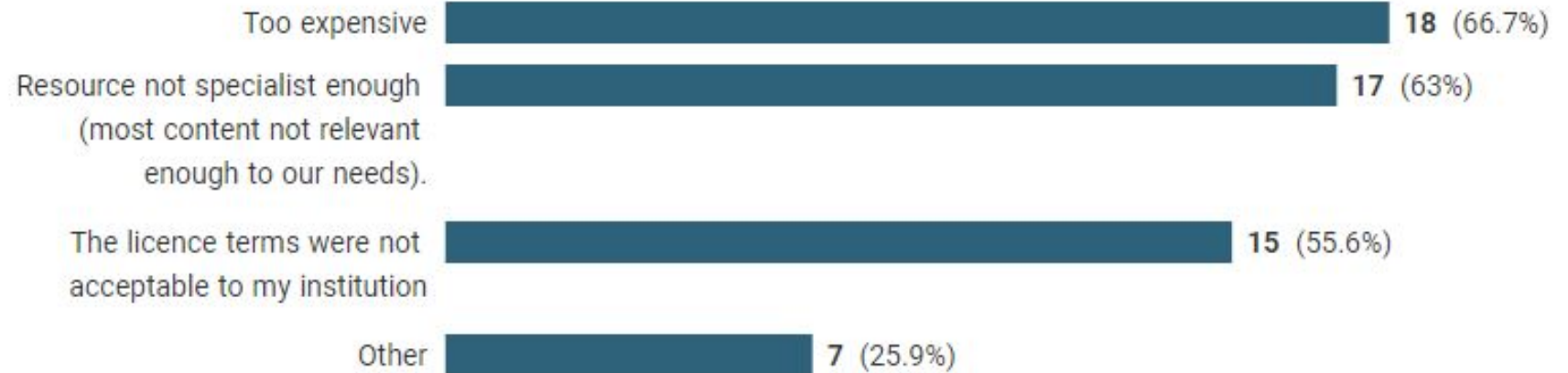
E-Resources. Obstacles

What are Libraries say:

Librarians - Have you faced any barriers to acquiring e-resources in ME languages for your institution?

60% said YES,
40% said NO

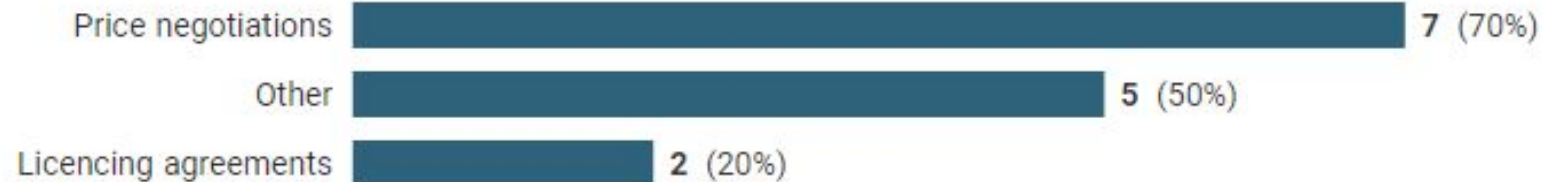
What do you think were the main obstacles you faced trying to buy e-resources in ME languages?



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

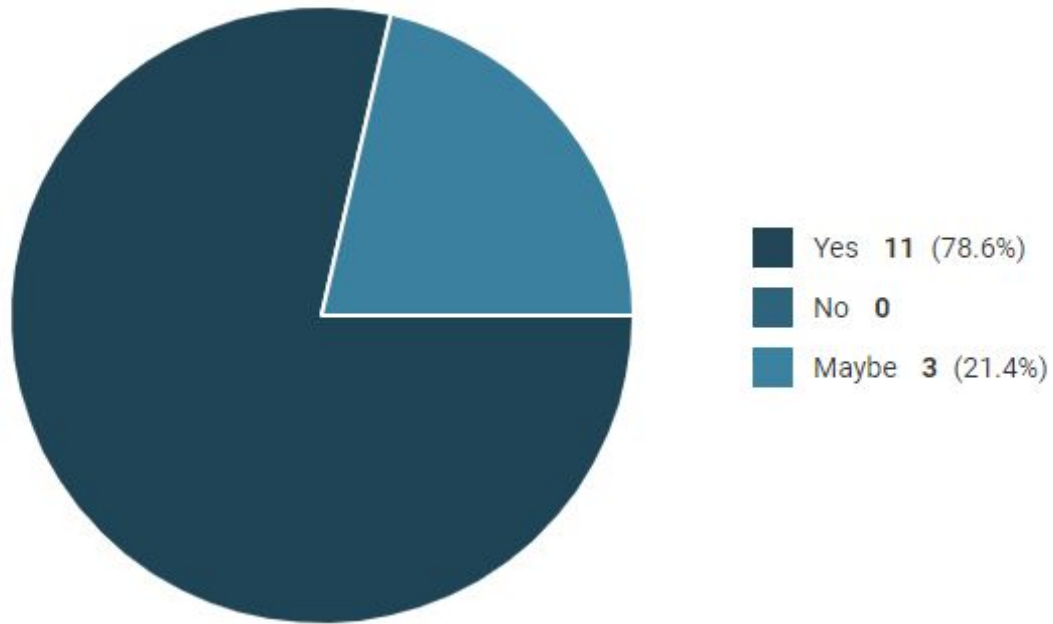
What are Vendors say:

What are the biggest obstacles for selling e-resources in ME languages such as databases to institutions?



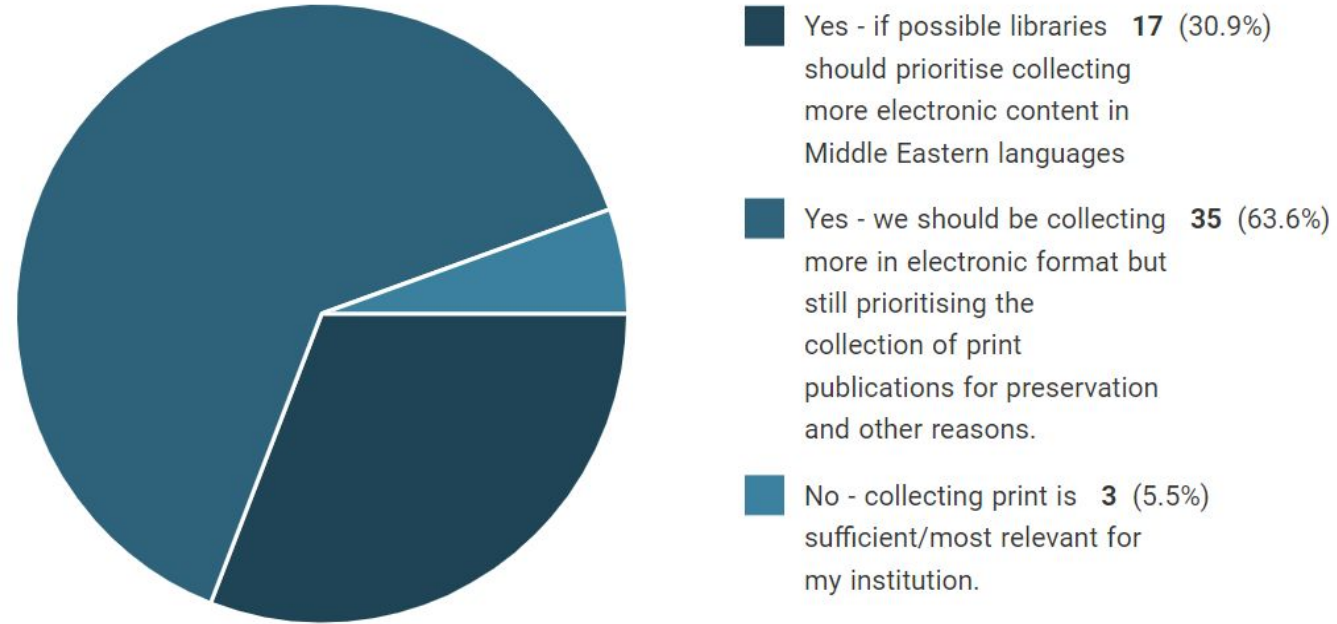
Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

Future expectations



Vendors:

Do you hope to see your company sell publications in electronic format in the future?



Libraries:

Do you think libraries/institutions should collect more resources in electronic format in ME languages in the future?

Key points

- The research community expects digital resources
- The DIGITAL evolves in an environment of collaboration, skills and openness
- Decolonisation initiatives and counteract digital divides
- Obstacles, commercialisation & infrastructure
- How do we keep the Library at the heart of academia?





Ways Forward

- Opening up – sharing knowledge
- Facilitating dialogue - acting as intermediaries
- Collaborating – Consortiums...etc.
- Representing Middle Eastern Librarianship at policy level
- Support and training for the digital shift within Middle Eastern Librarianship