Understanding Health Sciences Librarians' Attitudes and Behaviors in Documenting and Sharing Knowledge Synthesis Search Strategies to Inform Best Practices

Jill Boruff, BA, MLIS, Associate Librarian, McGill University, Montreal, QC

Julia Martyniuk, BA, MI , Liaison and Education Librarian, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

Authors who could not join us today

Heather Cunningham, M.Sc., MLIS, University of Toronto

Karly Gunson, MLIS, University of Toronto

Ani Orchanian-Cheff, MISt, University Health Network (UHN)

Sabine Calleja, MI, McGill University

Alisa Beth Rod, M.A., Ph.D., McGill University

Alix Pincivy, MLIS, *Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine*

Daniela Ziegler, MLIS, *Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal*

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The premise: Searches as data

Knowledge Synthesis Searches as Code

- Searches are code or algorithm implemented on a database

- The corresponding output files are datasets

- In other words, we use searches to collect data from databases

KS Searches as Intellectual Work

- Emerging norms: data (and code) are considered important research outputs

- Code and data are recognized as intellectual work separate from publications

- It is logical to expand the mandate of the data management infrastructure to include KS searches

Depositing Searches into Data Repositories

By viewing knowledge synthesis (KS) searches as code and depositing them into data repositories, librarians assert their intellectual control over their work, ensuring that the search strategies are properly reported and presented as stand-alone intellectual outputs

We argue the point further in this paper:

Rod, A. B., & Boruff, J. T. (2024). Searches as data: archiving and sharing search strategies using an institutional data repository. Journal of the Medical Library Association : JMLA, 112(1), 42–47. https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2024.1791

Why an institutional data repository for KS work?

Data repository infrastructures are more robust for handling files and documentation of searches

Ownership and control of our searches

Canada-wide shared infrastructure model using Scholars Portal Dataverse—open-source repository software

Institutional Repositories for KS Searches

McGill Librarians Knowledge Synthesis Search Materials Repository

https://borealisdata.ca/dataverse/mcgill_librarian_ks_search_repository

CHUM's *Stratégies de recherche pour les synthèses des connaissances*

https://borealisdata.ca/dataverse/bibliochum

CHUSJ's *Revues systématiques*

https://borealisdata.ca/dataverse/chusj

HSIC Knowledge Synthesis Search Strategies Repository

https://borealisdata.ca/dataverse/hsicsearches

Research study: Canada-wide survey

Survey details

Research question: What are Canadian health sciences librarians' attitudes and behaviors regarding the documentation and sharing of KS search strategies?

Methods: 15-minute mixed-methods survey (available in English or French)

Participants: 498 health sciences librarians/information specialists in Canada

Results: 128 completed responses (25.7% response rate)

Results - Work Setting

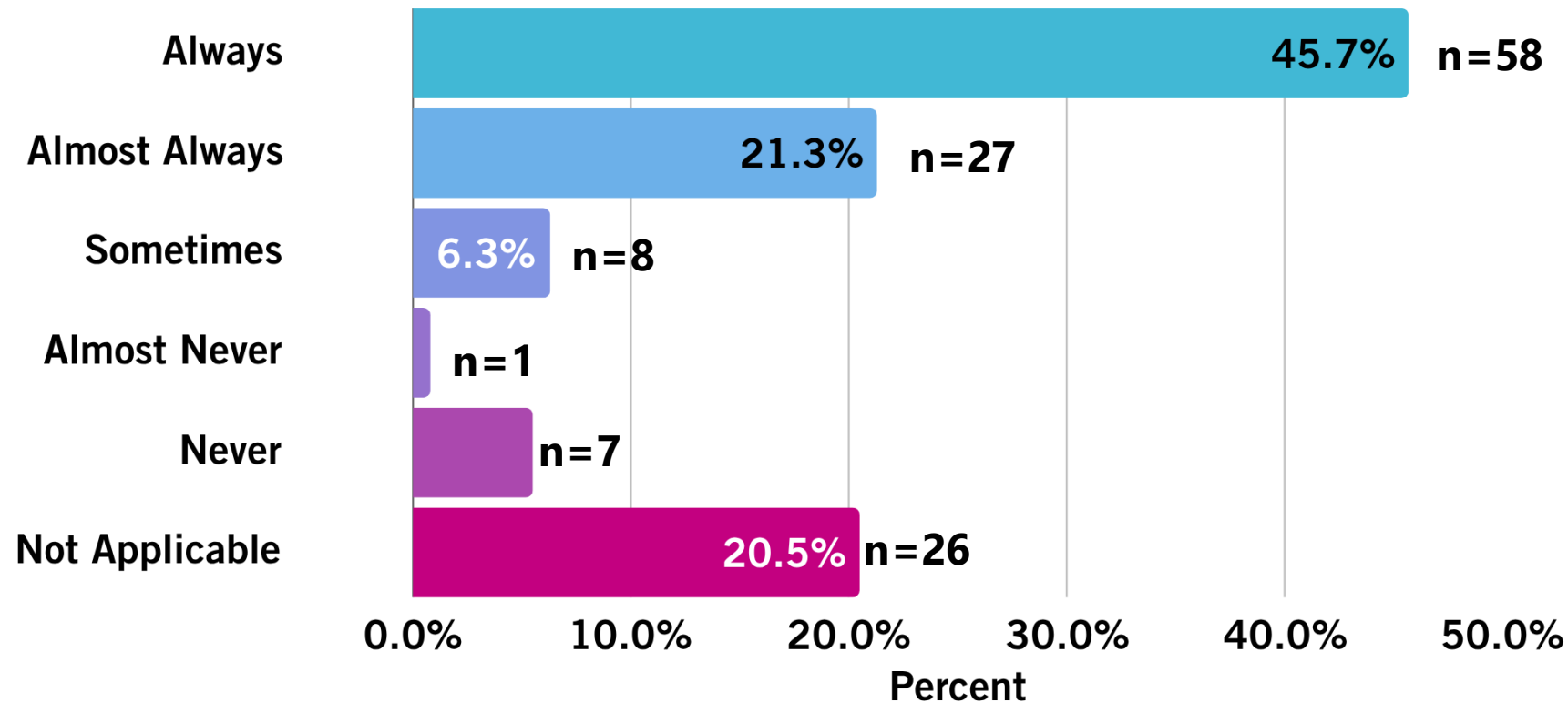| Affiliation	n	Percent
University or Academic Institution	76	59.4%
Hospital/Health System	50	39.1%
Special	1	0.8%
Other	1	0.8%
Total	128	100.0%

Results – Searches as Code

- 84.8% strongly agreed or agreed that search strategies and their related output files are equivalent to research data and code for knowledge synthesis publication

  - 61 strongly agree; 45 agree; 10 neither agree nor disagree; 8 disagree; 1 strongly disagree

- 84.4% strongly agreed or agreed that search strategies are independent, or stand-alone, research outputs

  - 53 strongly agree; 55 agree; 15 neither agree nor disagree; 4 disagree; 1 strongly disagree
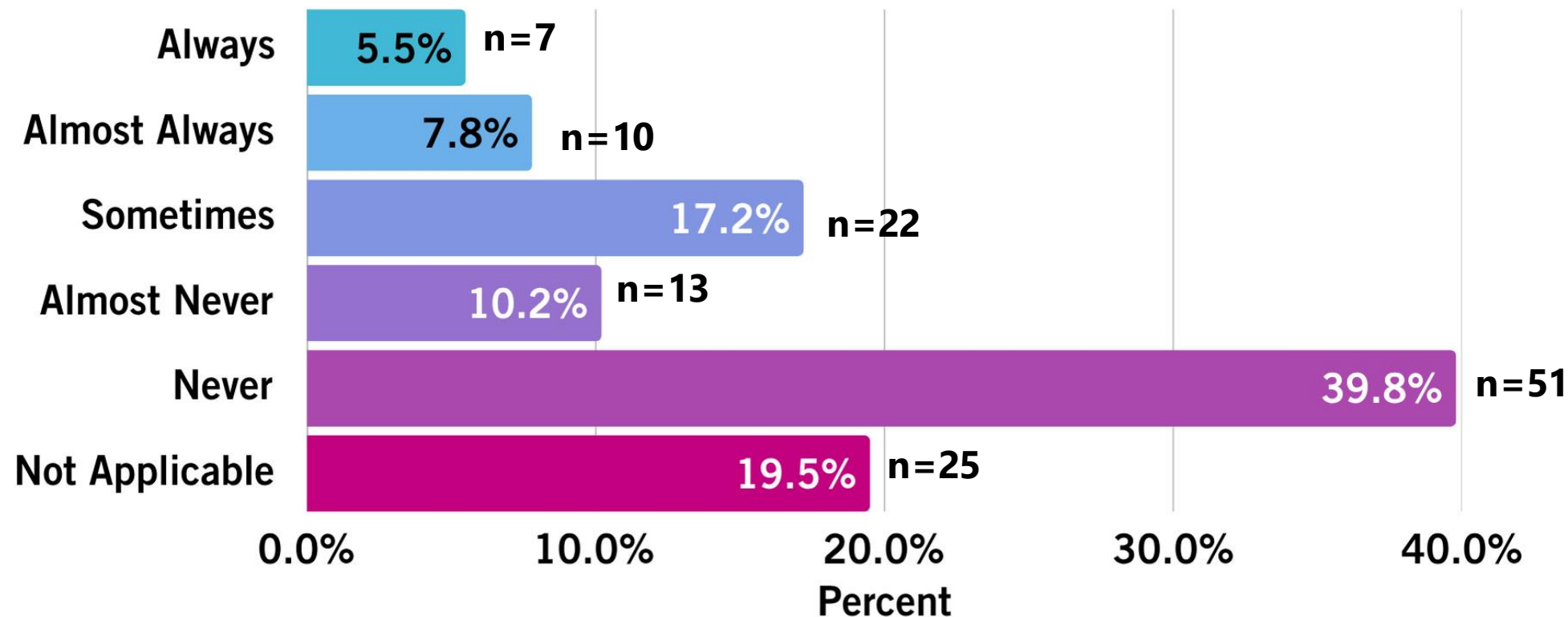
Results – Published vs Deposited Searches

How frequently have you included search strategies that you authored or co-authored as part of the published appendix or supplementary materials within the related journal publication(s)? (Total n=127)
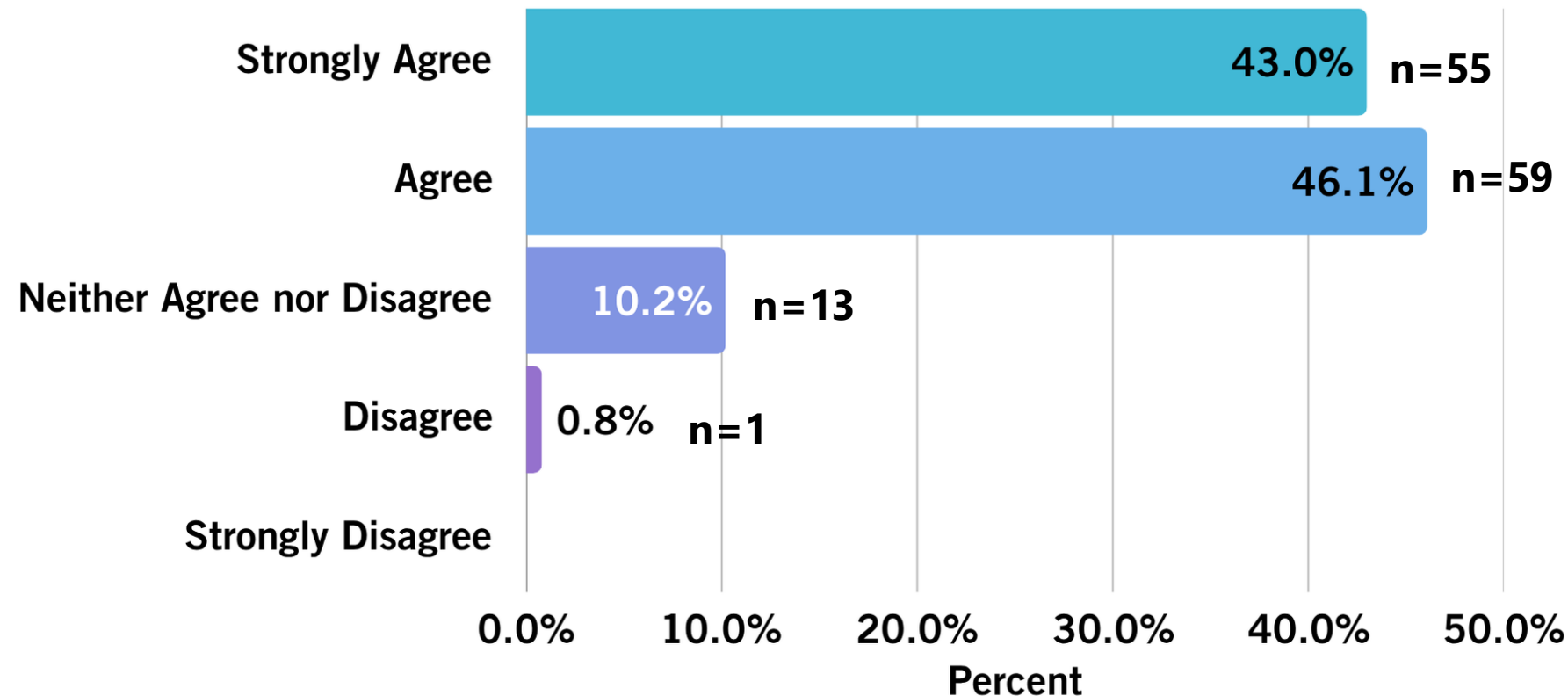
Results – Published vs Deposited Searches

How frequently have you deposited search strategies that you authored or co-authored in a data repository, an institutional repository, or other secure and permanent online archive? (Total n=128)
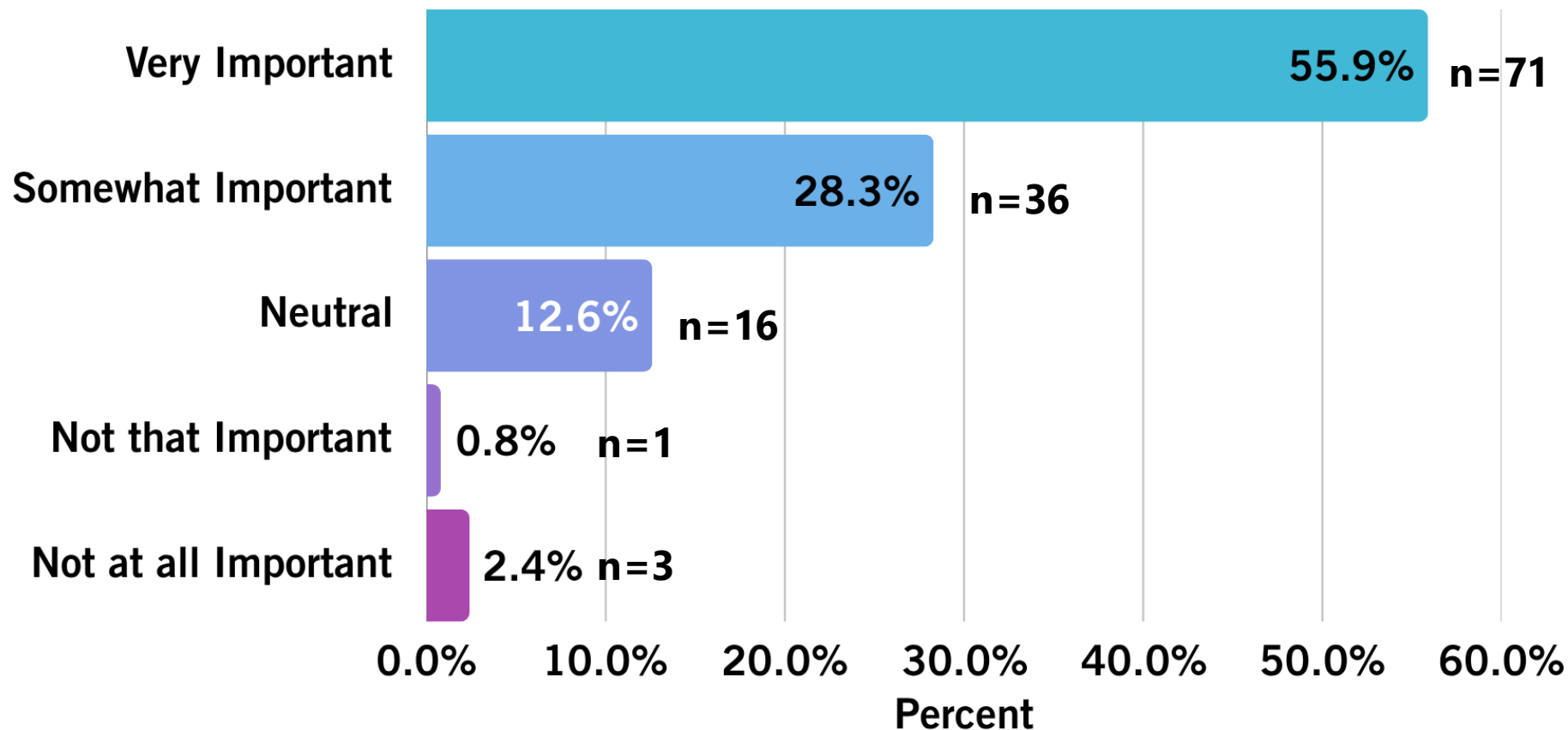
Results – Search Strategy Re-Use

Re-using all or part of an existing published search strategy is a good way to save time when creating new search strategies about similar topics (Total n=128)

Results – Recognition for intellectual work

How important is it to be cited for the search strategies that you authored or co-authored for knowledge synthesis projects? (Total n=127)

Results – Citing Searches

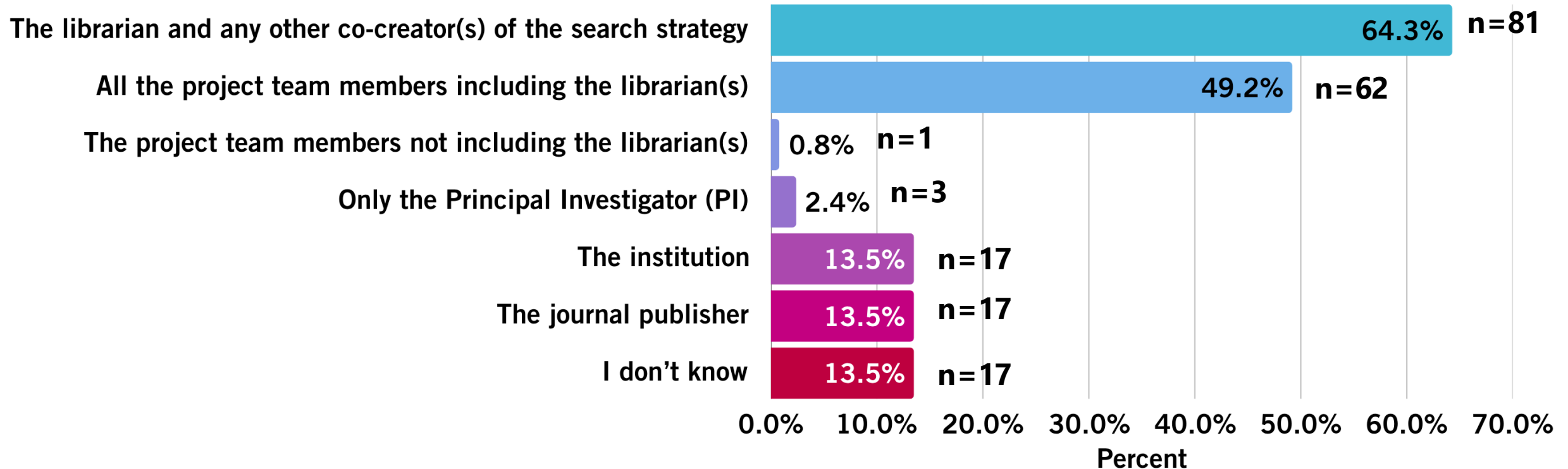Have you ever used or adapted an existing published strategy?
(Total n=126)

Response		N=X
Yes	84.9%	107
No	11.1%	14
Not applicable	4%	5

Have you ever cited or given attribution to an existing search strategy?
(Total n=127)

Response		N=X
Yes	57.5%	73
No	26%	33
Not applicable	16.5%	21

Results – Ownership

For knowledge synthesis projects, who owns the search strategy? (select all that apply) (Total n=128)

Qualitative data results

78 responses from 55 participants (43%) to 3 qualitative questions

- Do you have any additional comments about depositing search strategies or retaining intellectual control over search strategies?

- What other research data management (RDM) topics or practices would be helpful or interesting to you in your work on knowledge synthesis projects?

- Please let us know if you have any additional comments or thoughts about any of the topics covered in this survey.

Qualitative data results

- The desire for more guidance on how to deposit
- Workload concerns
- Concerns about reuse

I think a barrier for submitting my KS searches to a repository is just **not having a clear understanding on who owns the work** and **not having a clear workflow**. I need further education and time to develop a new workflow.

If it was coming from our supervisors and expected as part of our work, I would likely do it. I would want **step by step instructions** on how to do it for our institution. Otherwise, it feels like an **extra burden** on the librarian to figure out and commit to.

Discussion and conclusions

- Published vs Deposited data
- Support for searches as data
- Need to create guidance for depositing across Canada
- Qualitative data suggests need for education on intellectual property and RDM

Questions?

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Thank you!

Contact us!

jill.boruff@mcgill.ca

julia.martyniuk@utoronto.ca