

# Reaching Out to Under-served Illinois Firefighters: Results of a Survey Project

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## *Abstract*

For more than decades, there was no comprehensive Fire Library and Information Center existing and available for fire departments and firefighters in the State of Illinois. Beginning in 1997, the Illinois Fire Service Institute has made the organizational changes and adopted of a new Vision 2000 for the Future. The Illinois Fire Service Institute Library's Outreach Program was initiated and a survey conducted among all public and private Illinois fire departments in the summer of 1998. The Library Outreach Program expands the in-house library to a statewide Fire Library and Information Center to provide free library and information services and programs to all firefighters. The purpose of the presentation is to share the key results of the survey and draw some conclusions from the valuable data gathered.

## *Introduction*

For fire service in Illinois, there are 1,209 fire departments, 42,675 firefighters (8,600 officers, 13,300 paid). 70% of all departments are volunteer/paid on call with 20% turnover rate.

Effected on July 1, 1980, **Illinois Fire Service Institute Act** stated as follows for the Institute's primary functions: assist public & private fire departments in Illinois through education, training, counseling, measurement & evaluation services; certification training - state, region and local; education & training programs with competent full and part-time faculty; Fire College and other short courses; action-oriented research; instructional materials - develop & distribute; college credit & degrees - develop mechanisms for firefighters to earn; training facilities - plan, construct, and operate. The Institute has the following major responsibilities in the State's fire service: Scholarship; Research; Public Service; Leadership.

The Institute assists State's public and private fire departments to improve community fire safety through a variety of educational and information services. For statewide regional and local training and education programs, major programs managed by the Institute's Program Directors are: Fire fighting, Hazardous Materials (Haz Mat) & Terrorism, Rescue, Industry, Investigation & Fire Prevention and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Since the Institute was designed and statuted as the State Fire Academy in 1981, it has been able to reach about 1/3 of the firefighters in the State annually, representing over 950 different fire service organizations.

Under the new leadership of Director Richard Jaehne, the Institute has gone through new organizational structure changes and created a Vision 2000 for the Future since 1997. The Institute's mission is quoted as: "Through training, education, research and consultation, prepare and help Illinois firefighters and other emergency services providers develop the core skills required to effectively meet the emergency fire service needs of their communities." In FY 1999, the Institute's goal is to "reach every firefighter in Illinois with the best fire service training, education and information available in the world."

## ***The FSI Library's Outreach Program***

Having the most comprehensive fire literature and media resources in Illinois, followed the introduction of a broad change to the Institute's management philosophy and organizational structure, the FSI Library's Outreach Program is one of the critical and most important initiatives the Library has made in the past fiscal year (FY 1998) to address the evolution of the Library to fit into the new organizational structure changes and the adoption of the Vision 2000 for the Future.

The new Vision 2000 for the Future has five strategic plans, including Enhance Campus Activities, Regional Training Centers, Distance Connectivity, Volunteer Support Program and Sponsorship. All of which have directly impacted the further development and direction of the Library. Each goal requires outreach to both individuals and community public safety organizations in virtually every community in Illinois.

The purpose of the Library's Outreach Program, which expands the in-house library to a statewide Fire Library and Information Center is to provide free fire library and information services and programs to every Illinois firefighter. There is no existing comprehensive fire library and information center available, although the Office of the State Fire Marshal in Springfield has a video library to lend videotapes only. What needs and expectations does fire service have - can the Library meet them? What are important initiatives for the Library to pursue in the year 2000 and beyond to meet those needs and expectations? The answers to these questions are critical in an era of increasing user expectations and declining monetary resources. Apparently, how effectively the new Program designed by the Library will affect directly how successfully the Library reaches out the fire service community. Although it is costly and time-consuming to design and conduct a comprehensive user survey for the Outreach Program, we believe that such a survey would yield the best results, which would define and evaluate the challenges posted to the Library and let the Library make important recommendations to the Institute and the Library to address these challenges and issues.

### ***The Survey Population***

The entire population being surveyed and studied through the survey project consists of Illinois fire departments listed on the Fire Department Alphabetical Listing developed and compiled by the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) dated November 18, 1997. The total departments are 1,293 with 76 Paid, 195 Combined, 416 Paid On Call, 429 Volunteer, 4 Private, 6 Industrial, 3 Federal, 57 Other, and 21 Not Required. We grouped all Private, Industrial, Federal, and Not Required to Other category. Therefore, for the types of fire departments, we had Paid, Paid On Call, Volunteer, Combined, and Other.

All fire departments on the OSFM's Fire Department Alphabetical Listing had an equal chance of being included and chosen. Sending out the survey by U.S. mail was the chosen mode of administration for all fire departments since 70% fire departments are volunteer and no one is physically at the fire station.

The OSFM's Fire Department Alphabetical Listing only provides fire chief's name, instead of names for other fire service personnel. Some Chiefs gave the survey to his/her training officers or even firefighters to respond. Without other profile available, we had to address the survey to fire service personnel, including chief, training officer, firefighter, whoever received the survey and liked to participate.

# ***The Survey Instrument***

## **Cover letter**

To: Illinois Fire Service Personnel  
From: Lian Ruan, Librarian, Illinois Fire Service Institute  
Re: FSI Library Outreach Program Survey  
Date: May 27, 1998

As you may know, historically, the FSI Library has been an in-house library and has mainly provided services and programs to faculty, field instructors, and students. From time to time, we also served some fire departments. We are thinking of officially expanding the library services and programs to all the fire departments in the State, because there are no existing library services and programs available to you. This new service will be called the FSI Library Outreach Program.

The purpose of the Outreach Program is to provide fire information services and programs to every firefighter in Illinois. One of our major goals is to obtain funding for the Outreach Program from various State organizations, State library systems, University of Illinois, and other agencies. Since this will be your State Fire Information Library that we are building up together with you, your support and feedback is crucial to help make this Program happen.

I am requesting that you fill out the survey and return to me by **July 15, 1998**. Please return it to: Lian Ruan, Librarian, Illinois Fire Service Institute, 11 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.

If you have questions, or if you need additional information, please call me at 217/333-8925; or fax, 217/244-6790, or e-mail L-ruan@uiuc.edu.

Thank you for your support of this Program. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

## **SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES**

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **FSI LIBRARY OUTREACH PROGRAM SURVEY**

#### **PART I - GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Last First M.I.  
Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_

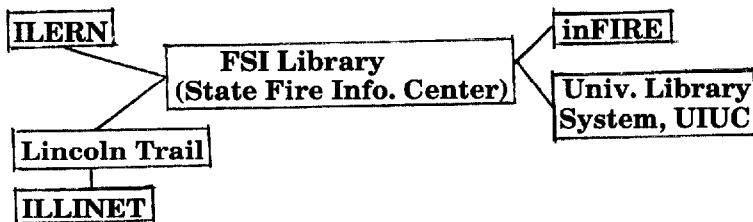
Organ. Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Box #

\_\_\_\_\_ City Zip

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Computer Access? Y\_N\_ Internet Access? Y\_N\_

**PART II - FSI LIBRARY OUTREACH PROGRAM**



Following is the full range of services and programs that the FSI Library Outreach Program could provide to you:

- (a) Ability to borrow from the FSI Library (in person or through interlibrary loan services), which is the largest fire information center in the State of Illinois. Center Includes 2,000+ books; 700+ video tapes; 90+ films; 100+ slide programs, 50+ overheads, and 200+ periodicals and newsletters
- (b) Print and on-line catalogs describing the FSI Library collections
- (c) Interlibrary loan services (if we don't have items here, we can get from other libraries) as we are a member of the inFIRE organization (the International Network for Fire Information and Resource Exchange, a worldwide consortium of libraries with significant collections of fire literature, including IFSTA and NFPA libraries), a member of ILERN (Illinois Emergency Response Network, a State-wide Fire and Information/Library System), and have other nation- and statewide interlibrary loan network access
- (d) Timely reference and bibliographic services on any specific interested topics and areas
- (e) Informational packages tailored to your local training interests and needs
- (f) Maximum five (5) items or two (2) packages allowed to check out each time from the Library for a two-week period
- (g) Library Advisory Committee comprised of members from different fire departments to refine policies and procedures for the Outreach Program
- (h) Assistance provided when needed to develop your departmental library and add it to ILERN, if you desire
- (I) Gift & Exchange Forum for library materials
- (j) FSI Library's E-mail Directory
- (k) Union List of Statewide Fire Information and Resources

Indicate your suggestions for services you would like to add to those mentioned above:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**PART III - YOUR TRAINING INFORMATION NEEDS AND DESIRES**

Please identify your top 5 training information needs and desires, which you would like the Outreach Program to provide (1 being the most important).

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

What format(s) of training materials best meets your local training needs:

IFSTA Manuals \_\_\_\_\_ NFPA Codes \_\_\_\_\_

IFSTA Overheads \_\_\_\_\_ Video Tapes \_\_\_\_\_

Slide Programs \_\_\_\_\_ Others \_\_\_\_\_

**PART IV - YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES**

Does your Department have a library or resource collection? Y\_\_N\_\_

If "yes," do you have a librarian or other working at your library? Y\_\_N\_\_

If "yes," Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First M.I. A/C

Would you like your library be added to ILERN (Illinois Emergency Resource Network, a group of fire and emergency libraries who share materials and information with each other)? Y\_\_N\_\_

If "yes," who would be your representative at ILERN? Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First M.I.

How many titles (including books, periodicals, videotapes, and other publications) does your Library have (please circle one)?

1-50 50-100 100-200 200-300 300-500 500+

Is the Library of your County Firefighters' Association located in your Dept.? Y\_\_N\_\_

If "yes," name of County Firefighters' Association \_\_\_\_\_

How many titles (including books, periodicals, videotapes, and other publications) does the Library of County Firefighters Association have (please circle one)?

1-50 50-100 100-200 200-300 300-500 500+

Do you use your local Public Library or other Libraries in your area? Y\_\_N\_\_

If "yes," Name(s) of the Librar(ies) \_\_\_\_\_

## **PART V YOUR SUPPORT**

Would you be interested in using this Library Outreach Program? Y\_\_N\_\_

Have you ever used materials or services of the FSI Library? Y\_\_N\_\_

In general, do you support FSI's effort to establish this Library Outreach Program? Y\_\_N\_\_

Would you consider making donations to the Outreach Program in the following ways (check as many as applied to you)?

Financial Contributions\_\_Books\_\_ Periodicals \_\_Slide Programs\_\_ Videotapes\_\_Others\_\_

Would you like to serve on the FSI Library Advisory Committee? Y\_\_N\_\_

If you do not support the concept of the Outreach Program, please explain reasons why\_\_\_\_\_

Comments, suggestions, ideas:\_\_\_\_\_

On September 22, October 20, and November 30, 1998, replacement questionnaires with cover letter and follow-up notices were mailed respectively to those on the mailing list who had not returned the original questionnaires.

As of Jan. 15, 1999, the total number of completion was 594. Among these, 13 repeated ones, and 26 returned mails. The number of eligible respondents was 581. The 581 respondents represented 576 fire departments (sometimes two persons from the same fire department responded the survey). The response rate is 46% .

Data were coded, analyzed and examined by Lian Ruan, Librarian and her graduate assistant, who did data entry and tabulation. The survey data enables us to make comfortable statements such as 93% of the respondents supported FSI's effort to establish the Outreach Program.

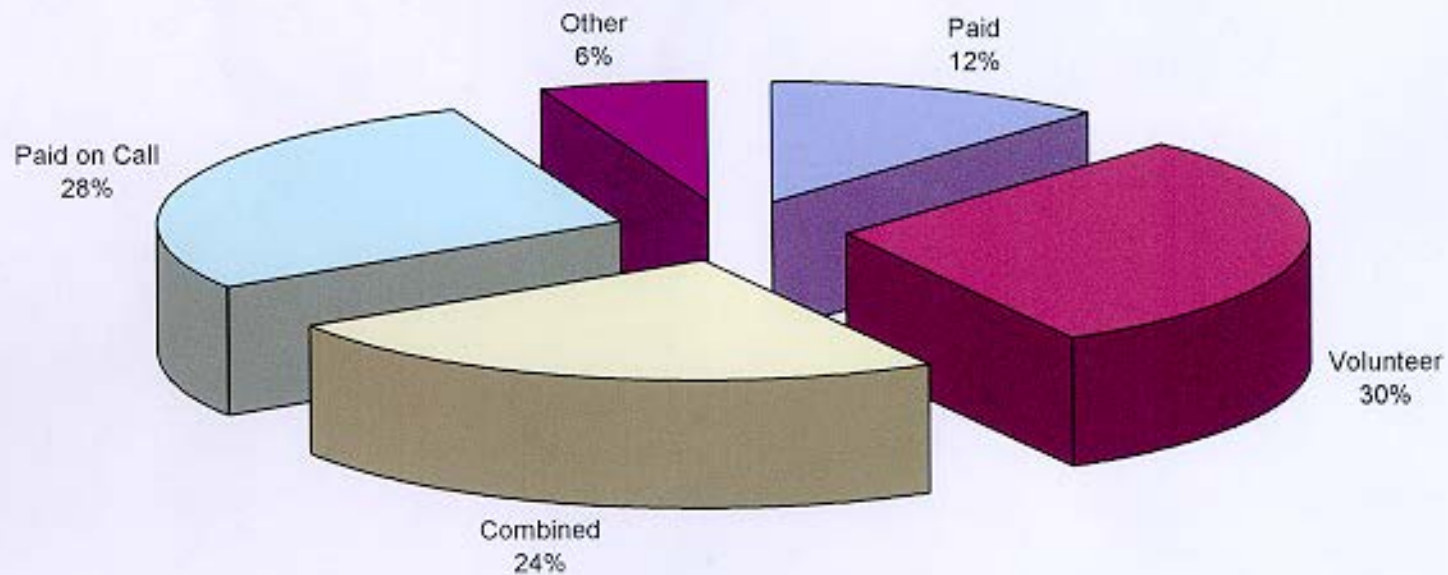
### ***Key Survey Findings***

#### **1. Who Responded?**

- . **Grouped Respondents by Type of Fire Departments** ( Graphic 1)
- . **Grouped Respondents by Fire Service Personnel** (Graphic 2)
- . **Grouped Respondents By Regional Location** (Graphic 3)

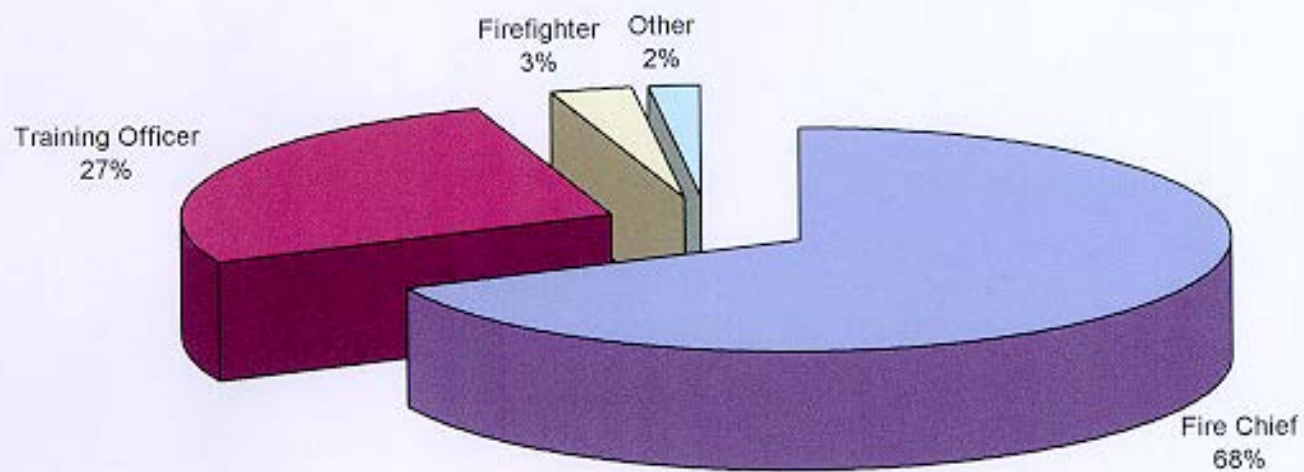
Graphic 1

Respondents by Types of Fire Departments (total=576)



Graphic 2

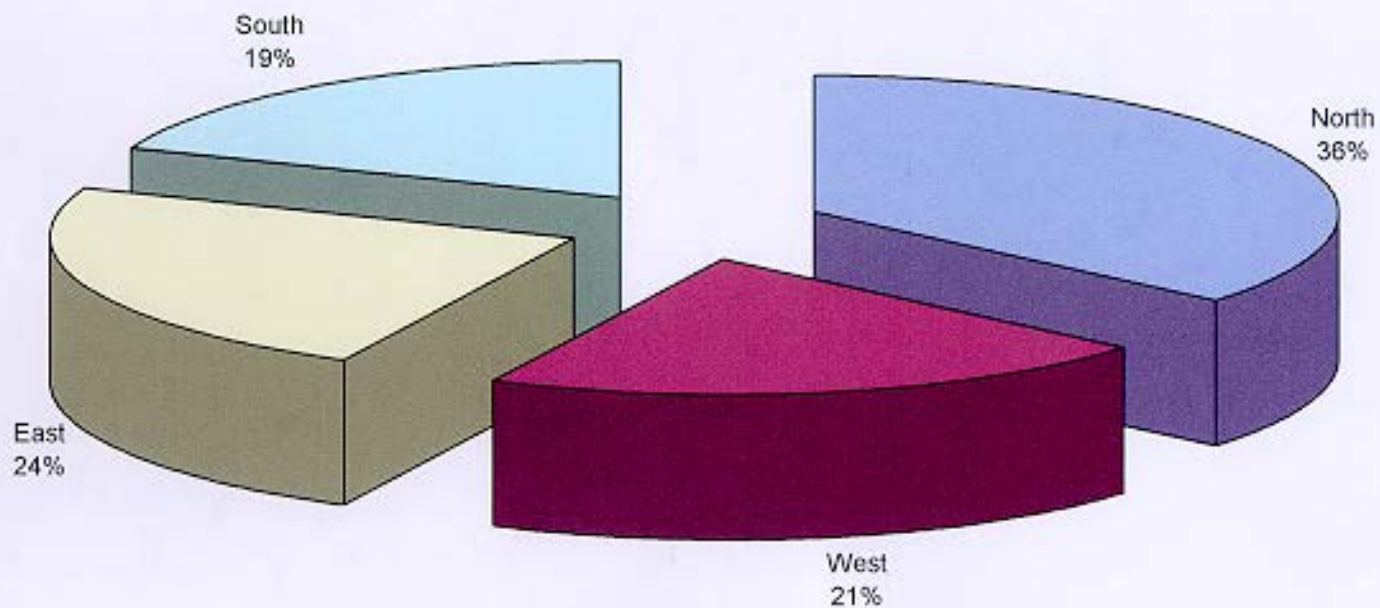
Respondents by Fire Service Personnel (Total=573)





Graphic 3

Respondents by Regional Location (Total=574)

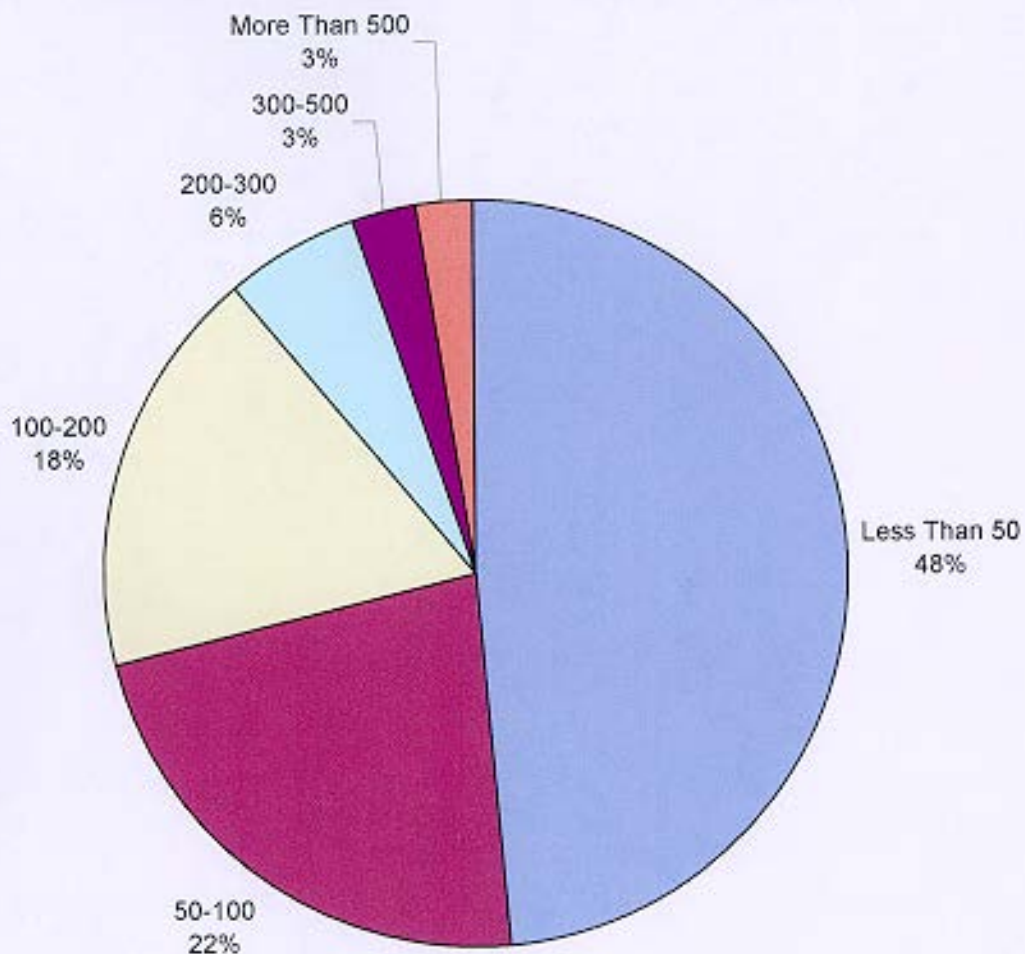


## 2. What They Responded:

- **E-mail, Computer, and Internet Accessibility** (Graphic 4)
- **Suggestions to Outreach Program's Services** (Graphic 5)
- **Training Information Needs & Desires** (Graphic 6)
- **Formats of Training Materials Best Meets Local Needs** ( Graphic 7)
- **Fire Departmental Libraries, Compared to 1991's FSI Library Survey**  
(Graphic 8)
- **Person Who Works at the Departmental Libraries** (Graphic 9)
- **Departmental Libraries Collections** (Graphic 10)
- **County Firefighters' Association Library & Collections** (Graphic 11)
- **Usage and Access to Illinois State Libraries Systems By Type of Library** (Graphic 12)
- **Usage and Access to Illinois State Libraries Systems by Libraries Systems**  
(Graphic 13)
- **Fire Departments Interested in Services or Support FSI's Effort to Establish the Outreach Program** (Graphic 14)
- **Support FSI's Effort to Establish Outreach Program by Contributions** (Graphic 15)

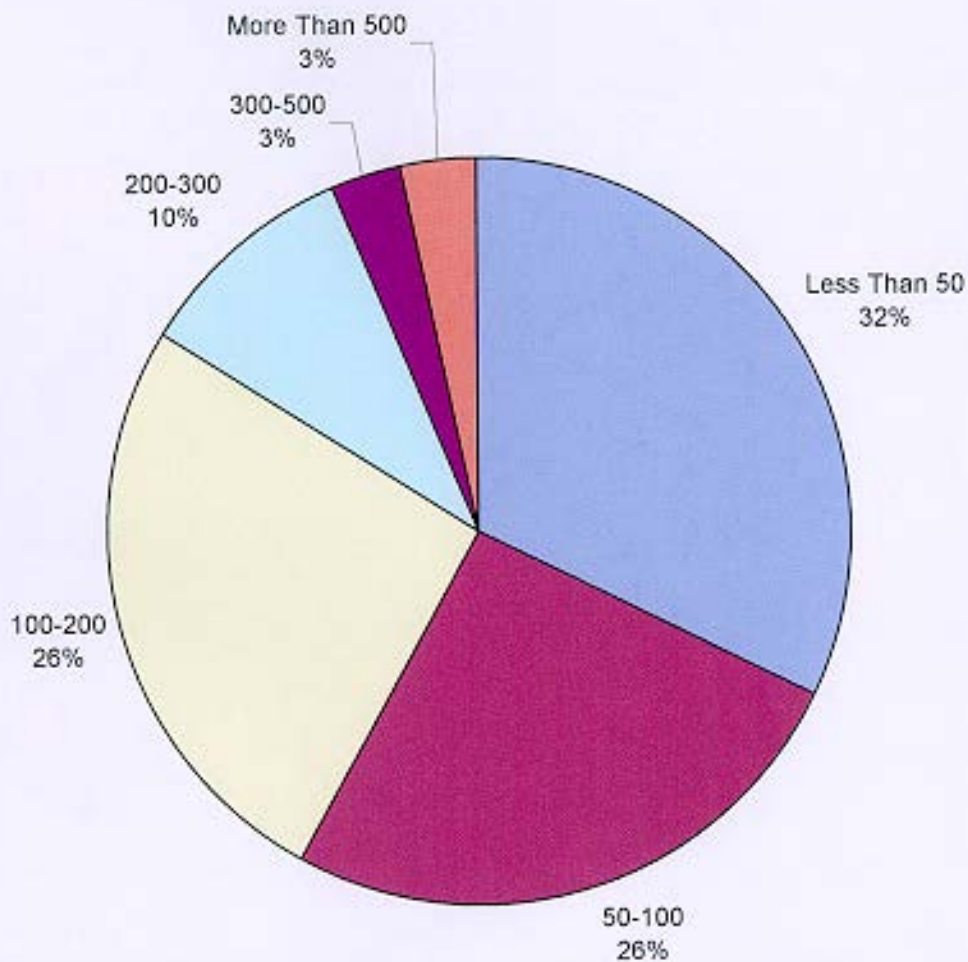
Graphic 10

Departmental Libraries Collections (Total = 305)



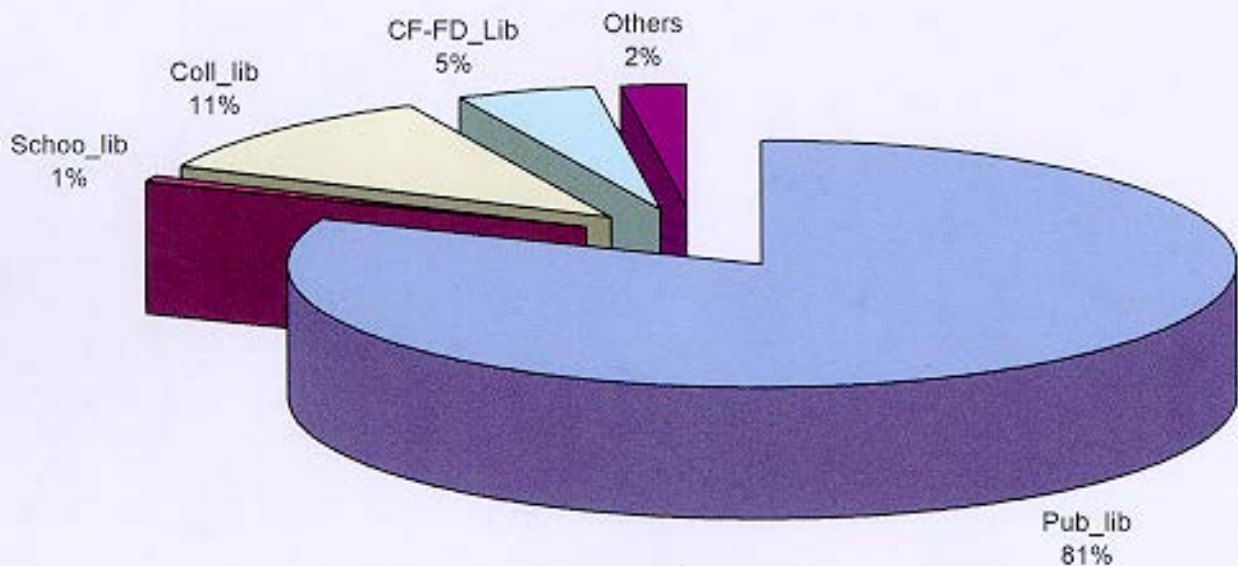
Graphic 11

County Firefighters' Association Library Collections (Total=31)



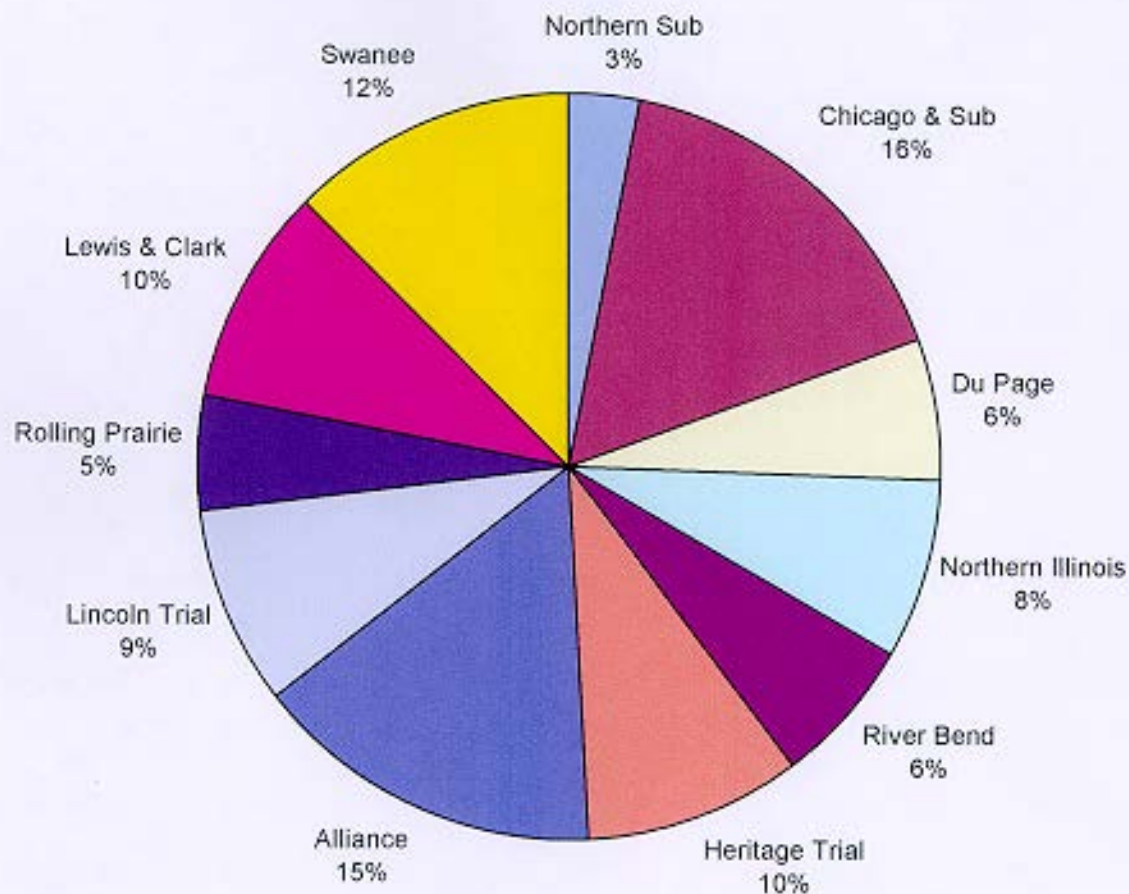
Graphic 12

Usage and Access to Illinois State Libraries by Type of Library ( Total = 228)



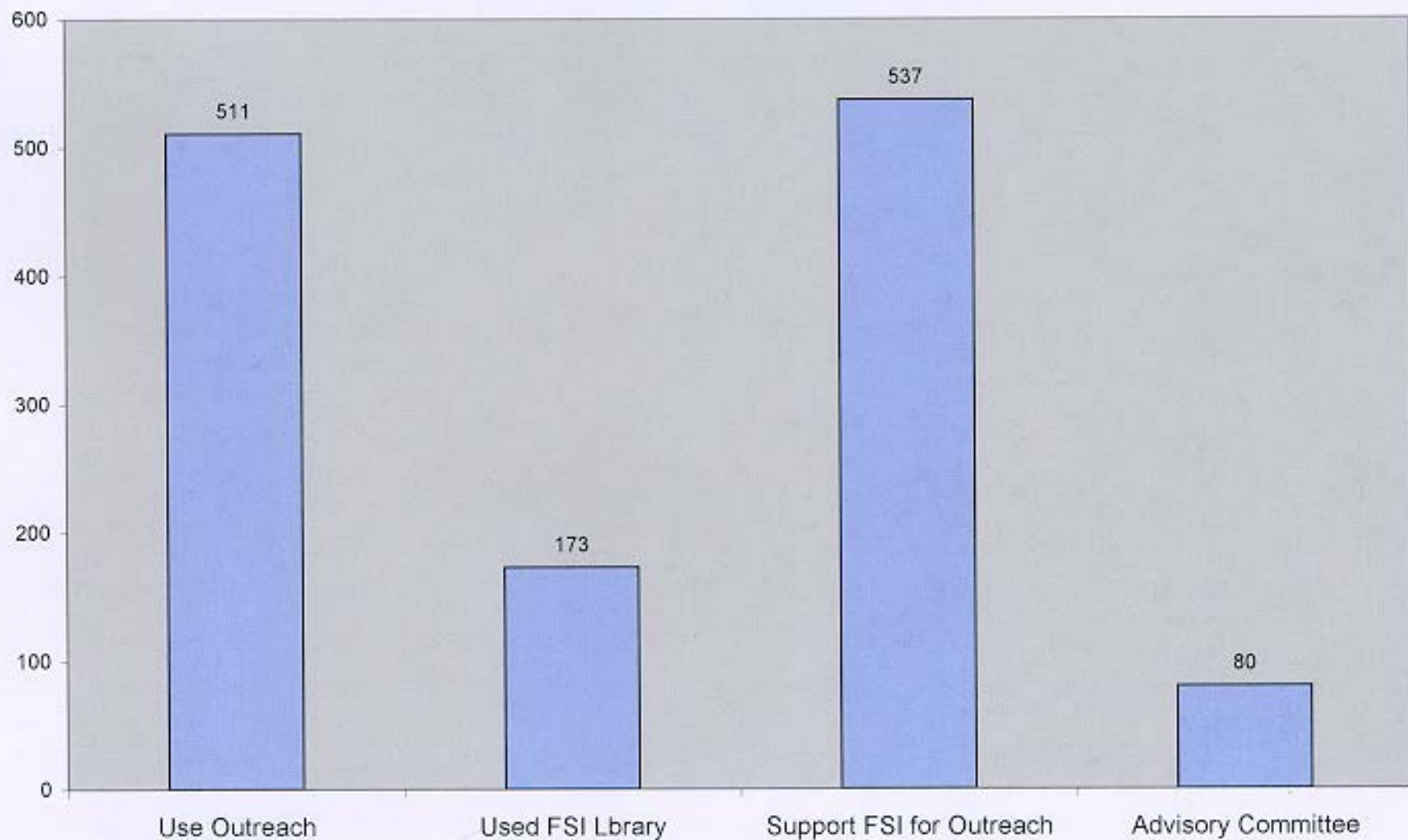
Graphic 13

Usage and Access to Illinois State Libraries by Libraries System (Total = 574)



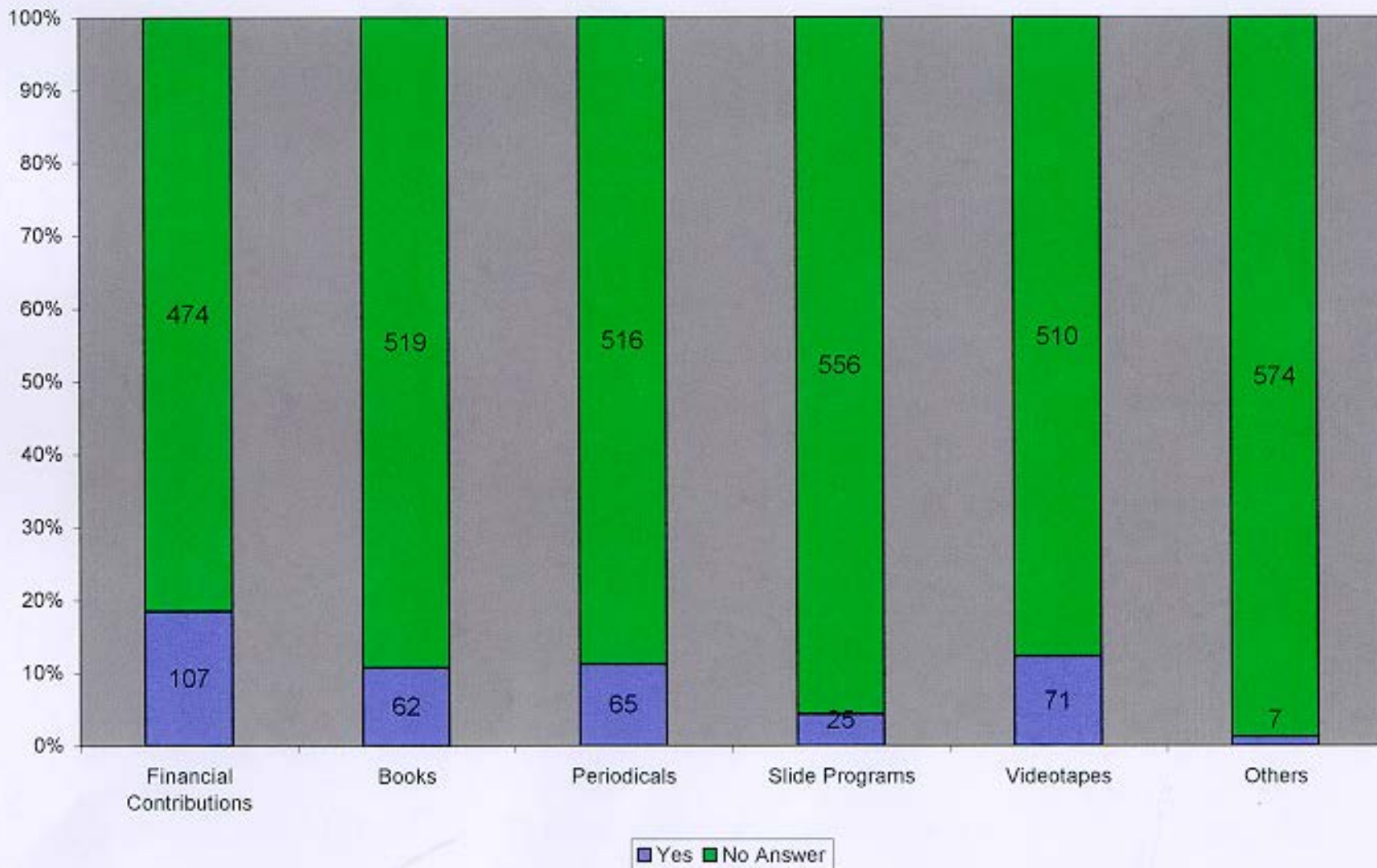
Graphic 14

## Fire Departments Interested in Services or Support FSI (n=581)



Graphic 15

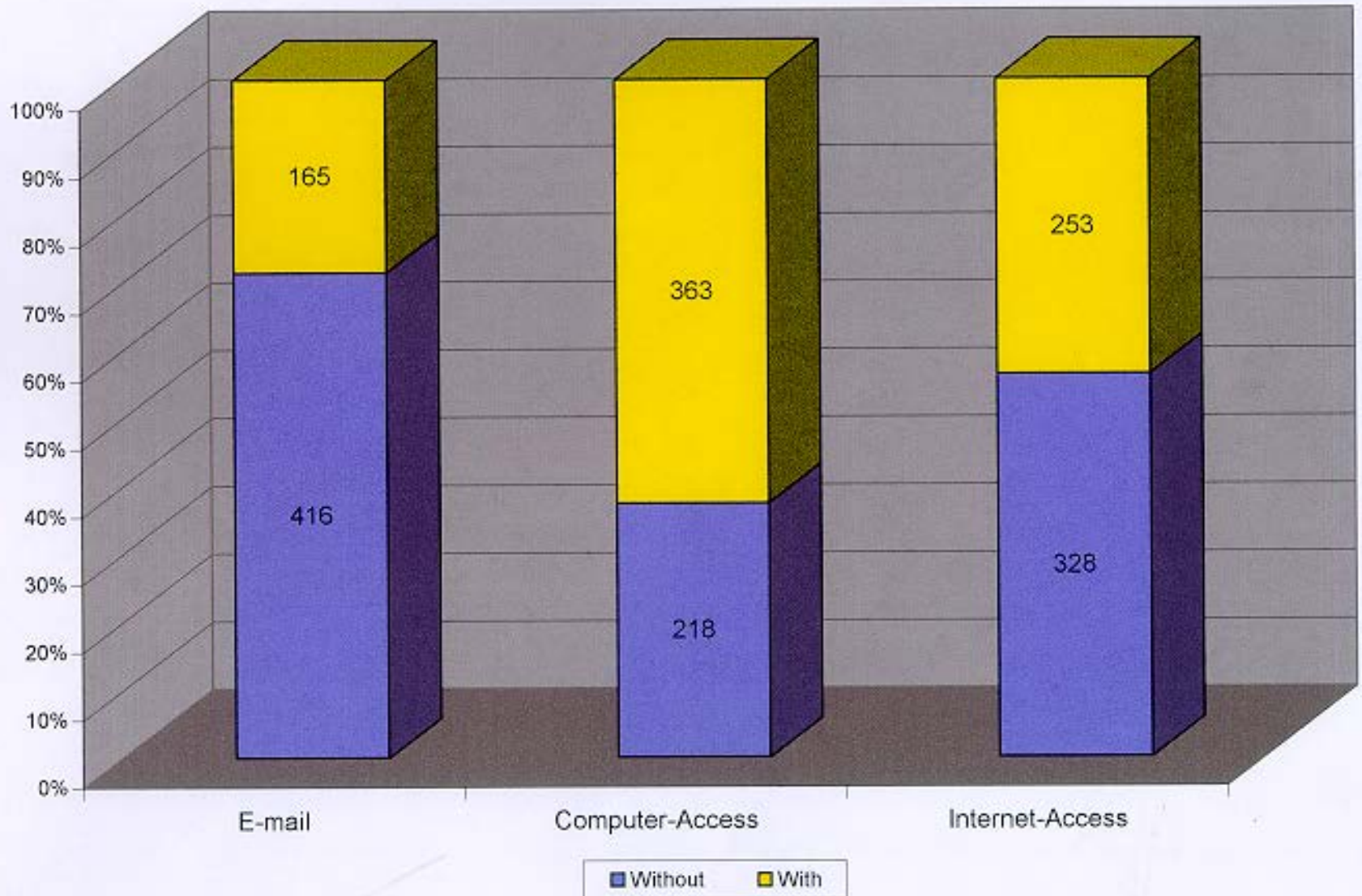
Support FSI's Effort to Establish Outreach Program by Contributions (N=581)





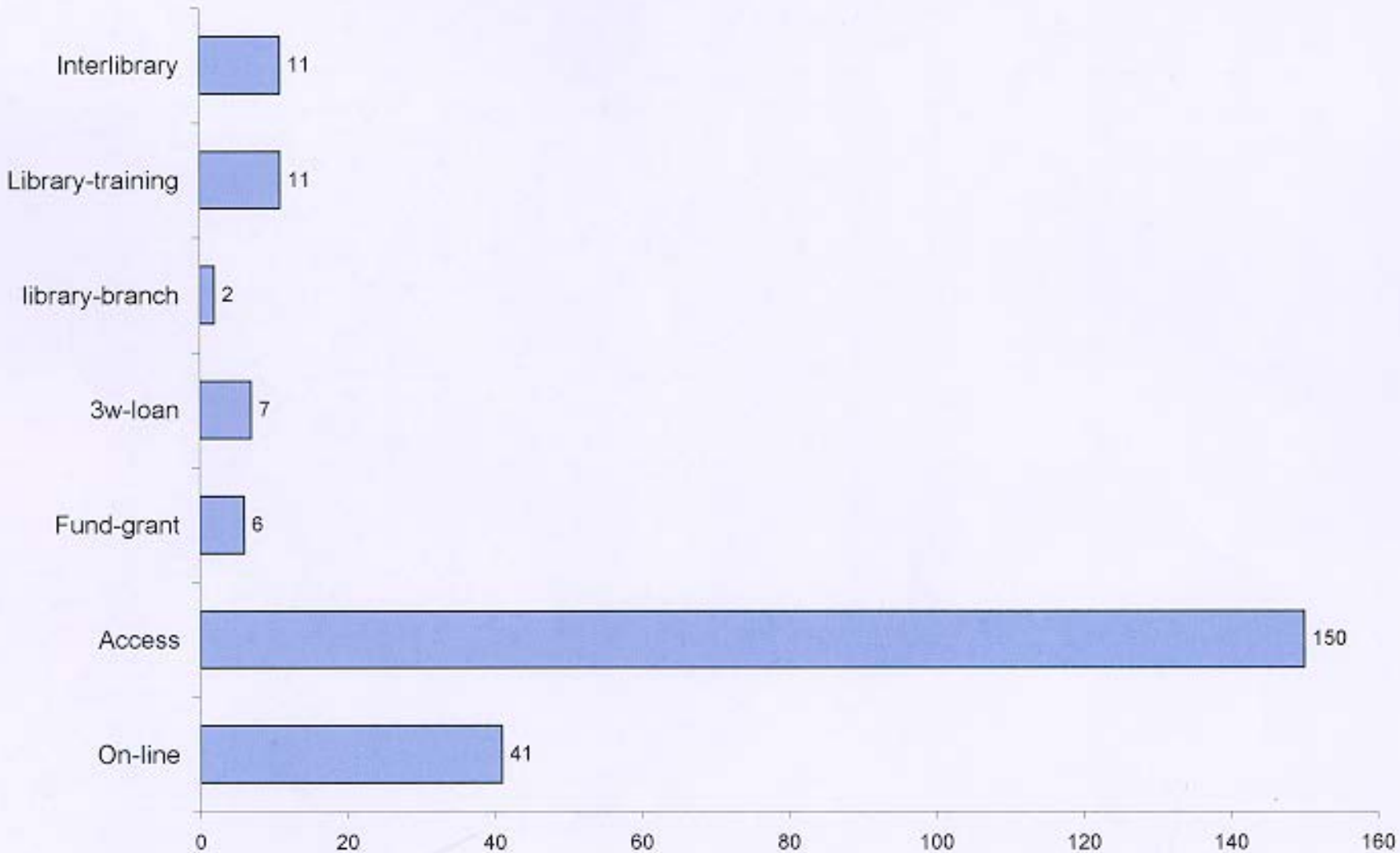
Graphic 4

### E-mail, Computer, and Internet Accessibility



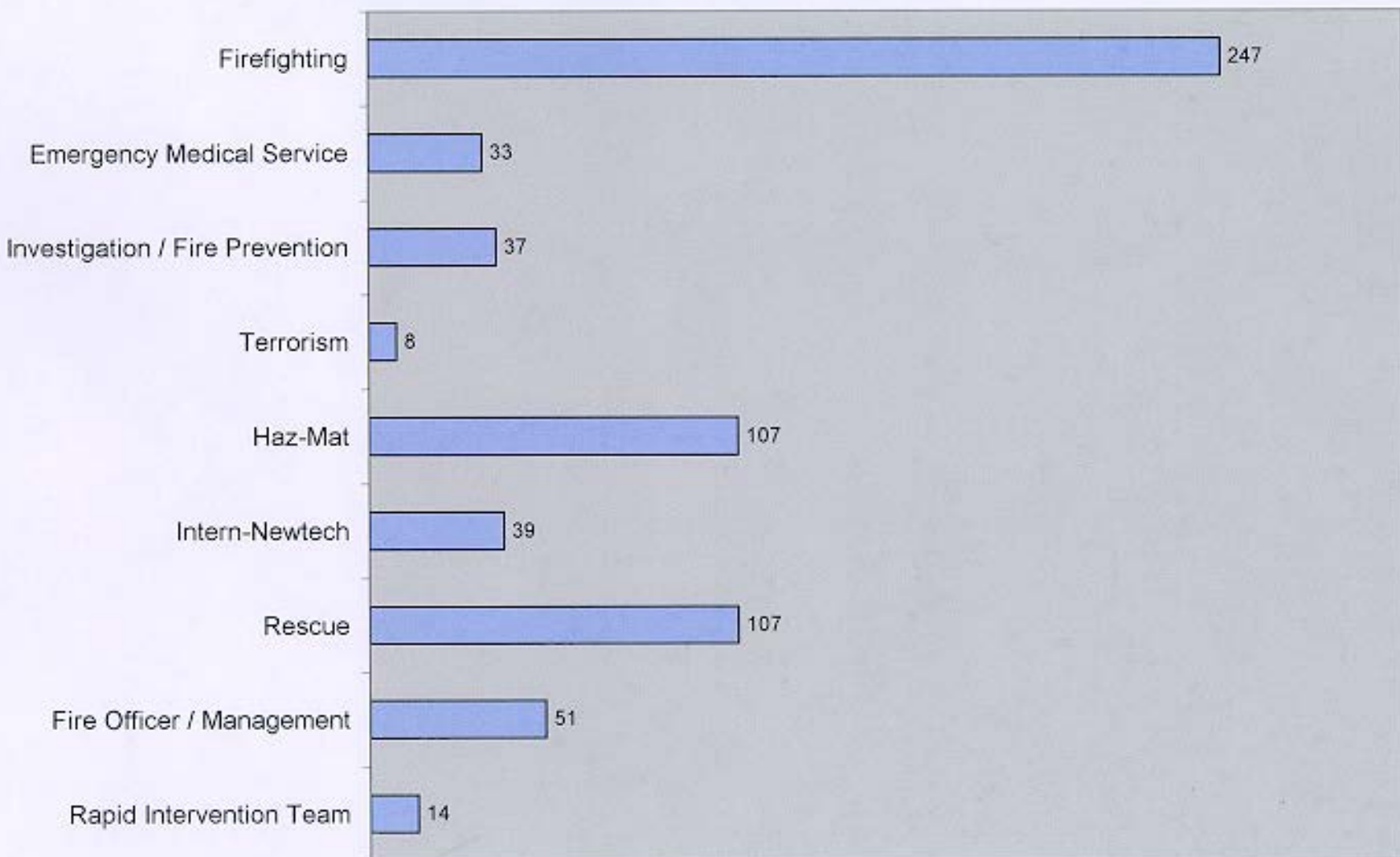
Graphic 5

### Suggestions to Outreach Program's Services



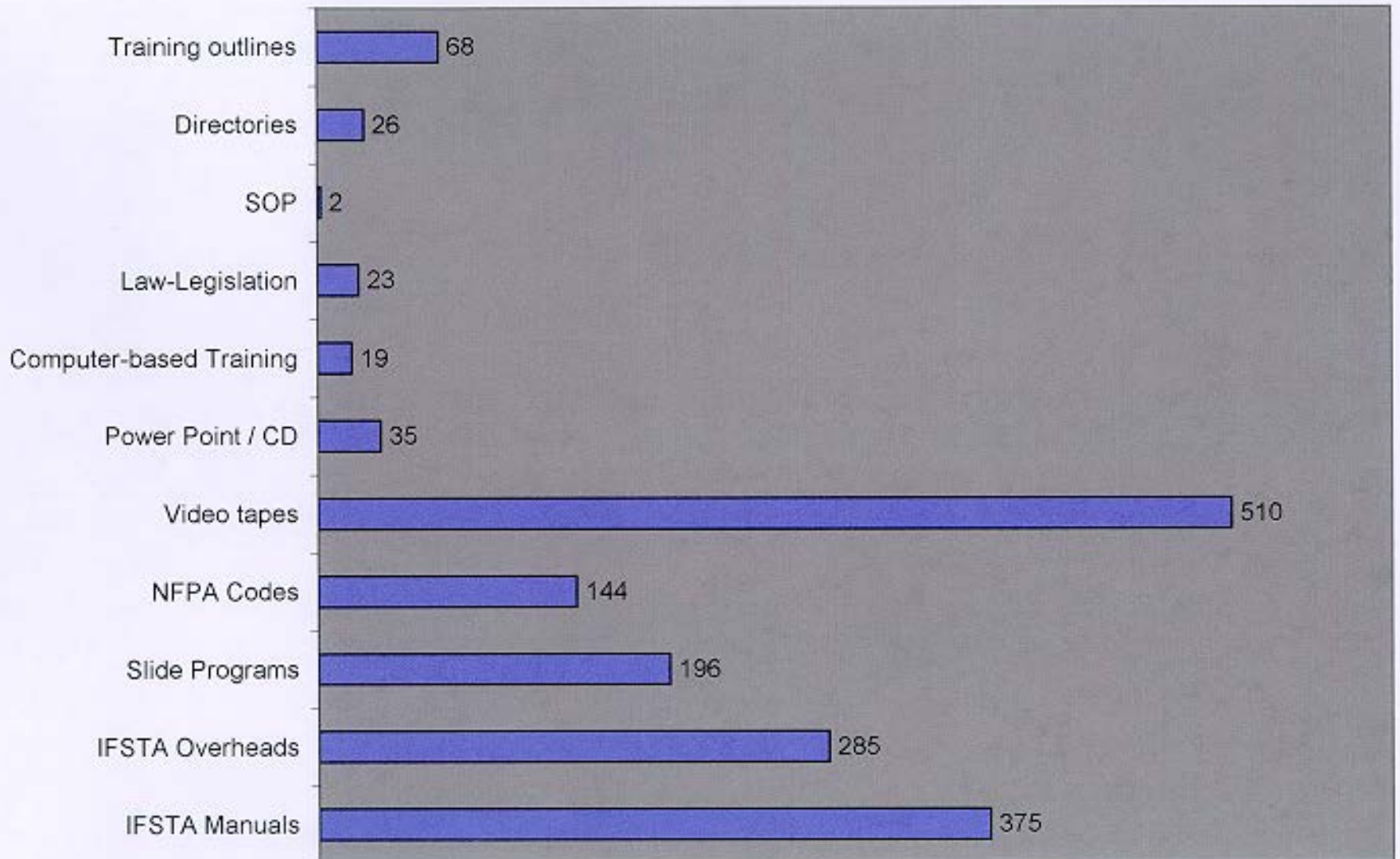
Graphic 6

## Training Information Needs & Desires



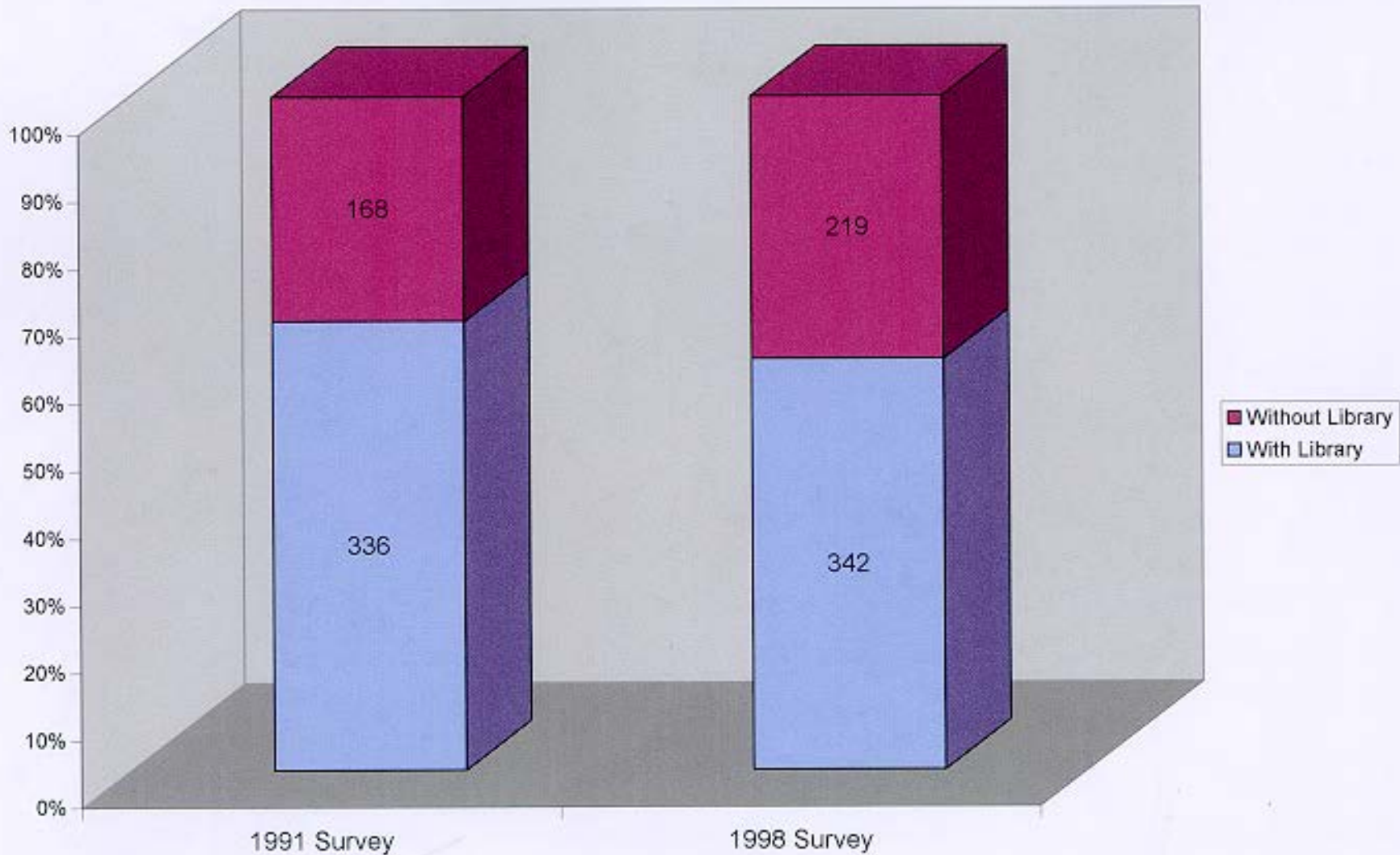
Graphic 7

### Formats of Training Materials Best For Local Needs



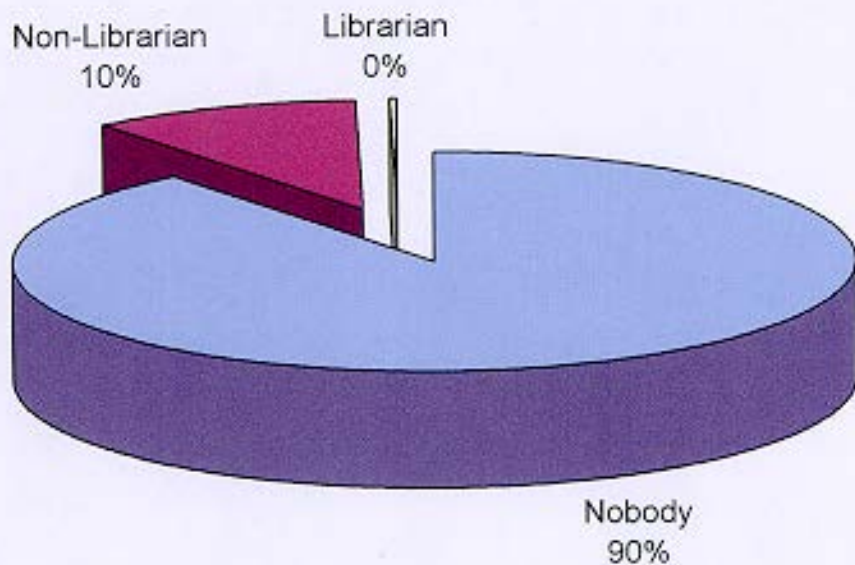
Graphic 8

# Fire Departmental Libraries, Compared to 1991's FSI Library Survey



Graphic 9

## Person Who Works in the Departmental Libraries (Total = 342)



### **3. Respondents' Comments, Suggestions & Ideas**

Respondents made their comments, suggestions, and ideas in the last part of the survey. When the responses were categorized and examined, they revealed some consensus and concerns about the Outreach Program. These responses are valuable because they reveal the importance of the users' expectations and state the issues in their own words. Some typical responses are included that the respondents believed and supported the positive role of the Outreach Program could play in the local fire departments' training to better help improve the training of the firefighters and to assist instructors in improving their teaching abilities. They also believed and supported that the Outreach Program could be great benefit to those who lack of funding and resources, particularly small and volunteer fire departments. Some respondents suggested that the access to the Library should be enhanced through a comprehensive web site.

The respondents also showed their concerns about easy accessibility and accountability for materials to return. "On a state-wide basis the Program must have a positive cost/benefit situation." Some worried about items not being returned properly in the public libraries systems. Good quality of videotapes was another concern.

Citing the reasons for not supporting the Outreach Program, they are listed as follows: no time; not know about the Library and Program; only useful for small departments; duplicating effort and not-long-enough loan period; far away distance from the Library; too hard to make it (the Program) work state-wide.

### ***The FSI Library's Responses to the Survey Findings***

Based on the survey results, we have developed the Library's Mission Statement is quoted as follows: "The Illinois Fire Service Institute Library (FSI Library) provides fire library and information assistance to the Institute's instructional staff, students, Illinois fire departments and firefighters, and other fire-related users in performance of their jobs successfully and effectively. The FSI Library selects, acquires, organizes, maintains, utilizes and disseminates internally and externally fire literature and media resources with the objective of furnishing accurate, up-to-date, timely, complete and relevant information assistance on the optimum usage of the facilities."

So far, besides continue improving the library services and programs in more timely and accurate fashion, the FSI Library has responded to the survey results in the following ways: since July 1998, the Library started to operate as a separate budget center and it was the first time to have a centralized budget for collection development. The Library's Listserv (fsilib-l@listserv.uiuc.edu) was set up in August, 1998 and through it, the Library distributes fire related information with two e-newsletters - the FSI Library Update and FSI Library Digest. In Nov., 1998, we gained Full Membership in the Lincoln Trail Libraries System (LTLS), one of the 12 State's regional libraries systems, thus making us eligible for the statewide interlibrary delivery system (started in March, 1999); statewide on-line system through LTLS Shared Database (in talks with LTLS); and funding/grants offered by the Illinois State Library (first mini-grant application was submitted in April 1999). In Fall, 1998, we joined the University Libraries System as Partner Unit and affiliated with Social Sciences Library Division. The Library was linked to the University Library's Web Site. In Dec., 1998, we purchased InMagic WebPublisher to provide internet access to the Library collection through the Institute's Web Site. We submitted the Library Outreach Program Survey Report (1st ed.) in Dec., 1998 to the Institute's Directors. Based on 80 candidates generated by the Survey, we formed the FSI Library Committee (Ad Hoc) by selecting 18 members from various types of fire departments (paid, paid on call, volunteers, combined, industry) and different types of fire service personnel (chief, training officer, firefighter) in four regions throughout the State. The first meeting was held at the Institute on April 27,

1999 and the Chair is Chief Richard Page from Centralia Fire Department. We established 30 hours of three graduate assistants ( hourly) as library staff. Developed action-oriented research projects, such as the FSI Library Outreach Program Survey; and etc.

## ***Conclusion***

In the nine-month's study period, we have come to appreciate better the FSI Library's importance to the Institute, the University, Illinois fire service and the public. We have also come to appreciate the tremendous support we have received from the Institute, fire departments, the University and state libraries system and other.

The survey produced a wealth of findings, far more than could be dealt with in the short term. The Library will continue analyzing and evaluating feedback from the survey and recommend changes where and when appropriate.

There is no doubt that the Outreach Program Survey provides us bench marking data to design and develop the new Outreach Program in more informative way. It helps assess how the program makes its progress by providing information services to every firefighter in the State of Illinois.

## ***Appendices***

### **A Definitions for Type of Fire Department**

According to the fax to the FSI Library on December 29, 1998, sent by the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal, "It has been determined that the designation of a Paid, Paid on Call or Volunteer department status came from each department that responded. In other words, we took the department's own words for their status."

### **B Definitions for Fire Service Personnel**

Generic definitions of all fire department staff is gleaned from IFSTA's **Fire Service Orientation and Terminology**, 3rd edition, pages 121-146, from which we summarize as follows with IFSTA's permission:

Fire Chief is the chief executive officer of the fire department, who is ultimately responsible for all operations within the fire department. In turn, the fire chief is responsible to the city manager, mayor, council, district board members, and the members of the fire department. The activities of the fire chief vary depending on the size of the fire department.

Training Officer's responsibilities involve the administration of all fire department training activities. Of primary importance to most departments is the intradepartmental training they establish and conduct. The training officer actually runs the program.

Typically, the training officer reports directly to the chief.

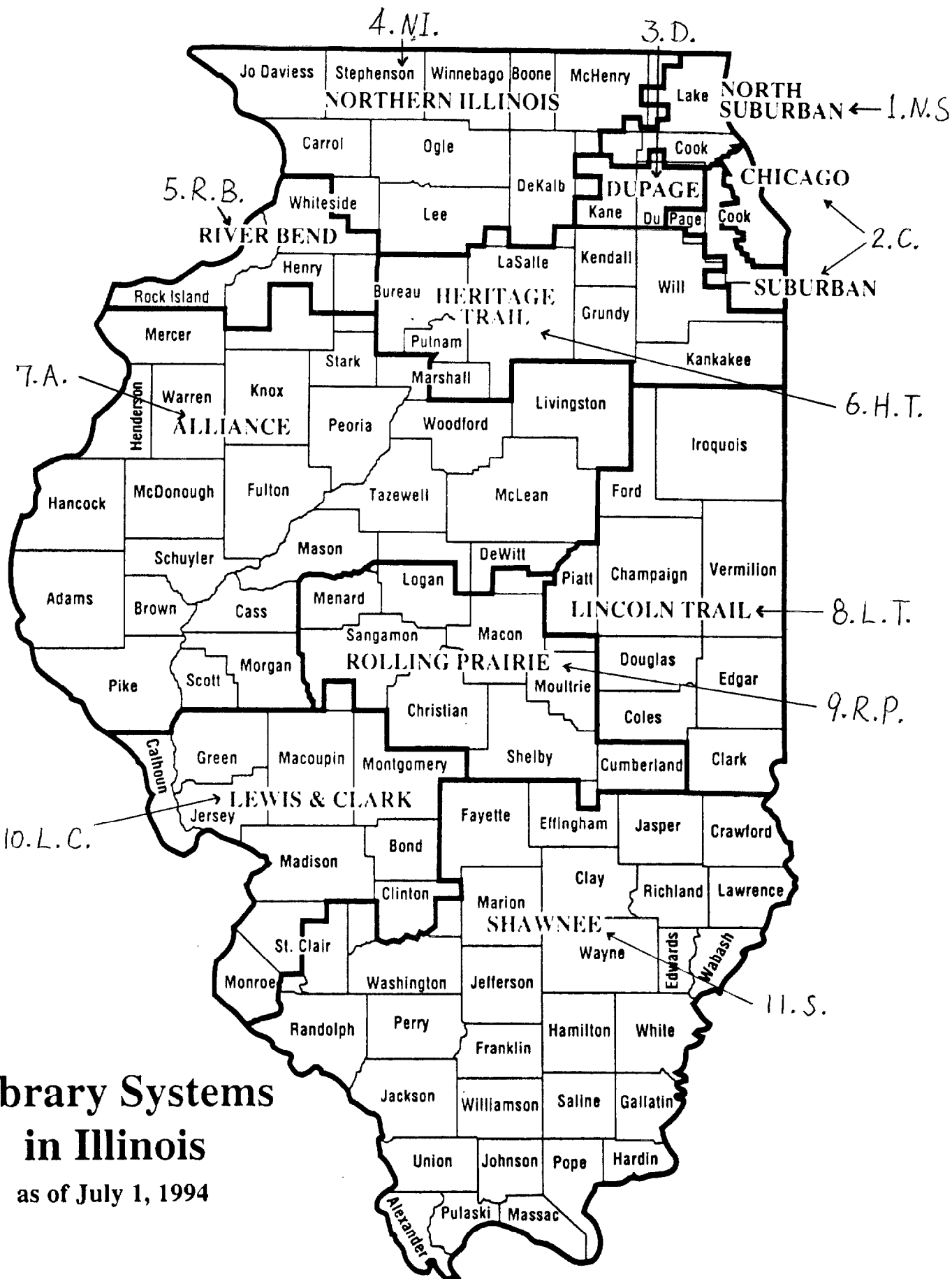
Firefighter is required to learn and participate in operating apparatus and performing hazardous tasks under emergency conditions, all of which require strenuous exertion with handicaps such as smoke and cramped surroundings.

### **C Codification with Map for All Counties in Illinois State Libraries Systems**

We roughly followed the boundaries of the State Libraries Systems since some counties were divided into two different libraries systems and we had no time to do further detailed work on them.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. N.S. - Northern Suburban<br>Lake   | 8. L.T.-Lincoln Trail<br>Champaign<br>Clark<br>Coles<br>Douglas<br>Edgar<br>Ford<br>Iroquois<br>Piatt<br>Vermilion  |
| 2. C.-Chicago & Suburban<br>Cook  |   |
| 3. D.-Du Page<br>Dupage<br>Kane   |   |
| 4. N.I.-Northern Illinois<br>Boone<br>Carroll<br>DeKalb<br>Jo Daviess<br>Lee<br>McHenry<br>Ogle<br>Rock Island<br>Stephenson<br>Winnebago   | 9. R.P.-Rolling Prairie<br>Christian<br>Cumberland<br>Logan<br>Macon<br>Menard<br>Moultrie<br>Sangamon<br>Shelby  |
| 5. R.B.-River Bend<br>Bureau<br>Whiteside<br>Henry<br>Rock Island   | 10. L.C.-Lewis & Clark<br>Bond<br>Calhoun<br>Cliton<br>Greene<br>Jersey<br>Macoupin<br>Madison<br>Monroe<br>Montgomery<br>St. Clair   |
| 6. H.T.-Heritage Trail<br>Grundy<br>Kankakee<br>Kendall<br>La Salle<br>Marshall<br>Putnam<br>Will   | 11. S.-Shawnee<br>Alexander<br>Clay<br>Crawford<br>Edward<br>Effingham<br>Fayette<br>Franklin<br>Gallatin<br>Hamilton<br>Hardin<br>Jackson<br>Jasper<br>Jefferson<br>Johnson<br>Lawrence<br>Marion<br>Massac<br>Perry<br>Pope<br>Pulaski<br>Randolph<br>Richland<br>Saline<br>Union<br>Wabash<br>Washington<br>White<br>Whilliamson |
| 7. A.-Alliance<br>Adams<br>Brown<br>Cass<br>De Witt<br>Fulton<br>Hancock<br>Henderson<br>Knox<br>Livingston<br>Mason<br>McDonough<br>Mclean<br>Mercer<br>Morgan<br>Peoria<br>Pike<br>Schuyler<br>Scott<br>Stark<br>Tazewell<br>Warren<br>Woodford |   |



**Library Systems  
in Illinois  
as of July 1, 1994**

Courtesy of Secretary of State and State Librarian

## D. Codification for All Illinois Counties in Four Regions

### 1 N. - Northern Region

Boone  
Carroll  
Cook  
DeKalb  
DuPage  
Jo Daviess  
Kane  
Lake  
Lee  
McHenry  
Ogle  
Rock Island  
Stephenson  
Whiteside  
Winnebago

### 2 W. - Western Region

Adams  
Brown  
Bureau  
Calhoun  
Cass  
Fulton  
Greene  
Handcock  
Henderson  
Henry  
Jersey  
Knox  
Logan  
McDonough  
Macoupin  
Marshall  
Mason  
Menard  
Mercer  
Morgan  
Montgomery  
Peoria  
Pike  
Putnam  
Sangamon  
Schuyler  
Scott  
Stark  
Tazewell  
Warren

### 3 E.- Eastern Region

Champaign  
Christian  
Coles  
DeWitt  
Douglas  
Edgar  
Ford  
Grundy  
Iroquios  
Kankakee  
Kendall  
LaSalle  
Livingston  
McLean  
Macon  
Moultrie  
Piatt  
Shelby  
Vermillion  
Will  
Woodford

### 4 S. - Southern Region

Alexander  
Bond  
Clark  
Clay  
Cliton  
Crawford  
Cumberland  
Edward  
Effingham  
Fayette  
Franklin  
Gallatin  
Harmilton  
Hardin  
Jackson  
Jasper  
Jefferson  
Johnson  
Lawrence  
Madison  
Marion  
Massas  
Moroe  
Perry  
Pulaski  
Pope  
Randolph  
Richland  
Saline  
St. Clair  
Union  
Wabash  
Washington  
Wayne  
White  
Williamson

## ***References***

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