

# Assessment of HathiTrust's Emergency Temporary Access Service

19 April 2021

## Executive Summary

This report summarizes assessment of Western Libraries' use of HathiTrust's Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS), which provides digital access to materials in the Libraries' print collection.

Usage data provided by HathiTrust shows consistent and growing use of the service during the period under investigation.

A survey found that respondents preferred not to come to campus for materials and felt that the service was important to their teaching, study, or research. The survey also surfaced concerns about the usability of the platform and the restriction of access to the print collection.

Based on this assessment, this report recommends the continuation of the HathiTrust ETAS service. Additional recommendations can be found at the end of the report.

## Purpose & Context for Assessment

Due to COVID-19 and access limitations to physical materials, Western Libraries has joined in HathiTrust's Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS) to give members of the Western community access to digitized resources that are part of Western Libraries' print collection and are normally restricted from online viewing due to copyright. HathiTrust ETAS has been active since January 18, 2021, providing temporary digital access to over 760,000 volumes in Western Libraries' print collection.

This assessment investigated use of HathiTrust ETAS, as well as user feedback. Recommendations based on this assessment will inform Western Libraries' decision to continue or discontinue HathiTrust ETAS.

## Usage Data

HathiTrust provides weekly ETAS usage data to each institution. During the period of January 18 through April 14, 2021:

- An average of 103 unique users per day used HathiTrust ETAS.
- 8,862 resources were used, for an average of 103 unique resources per day.
- 3,534 resources were renewed.

There has been an upward trend in usage during this period:

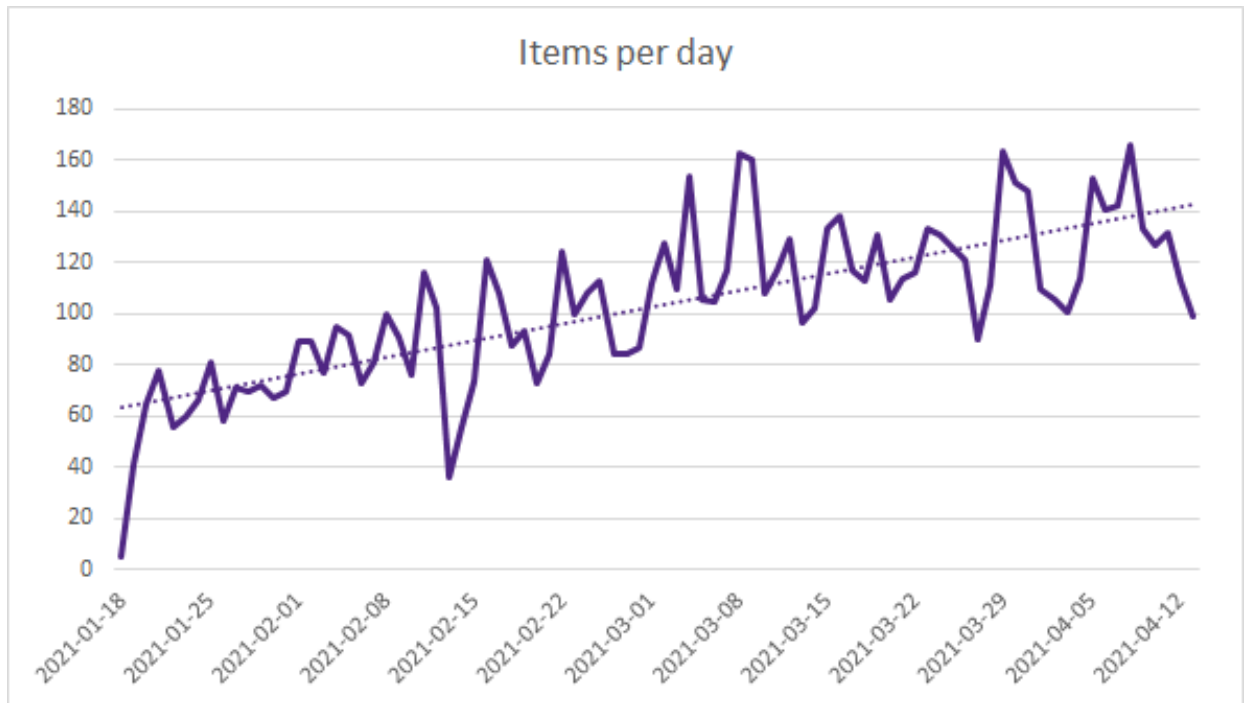


Fig 1. HathiTrust ETAS Items borrowed per day, January 18<sup>th</sup> through April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

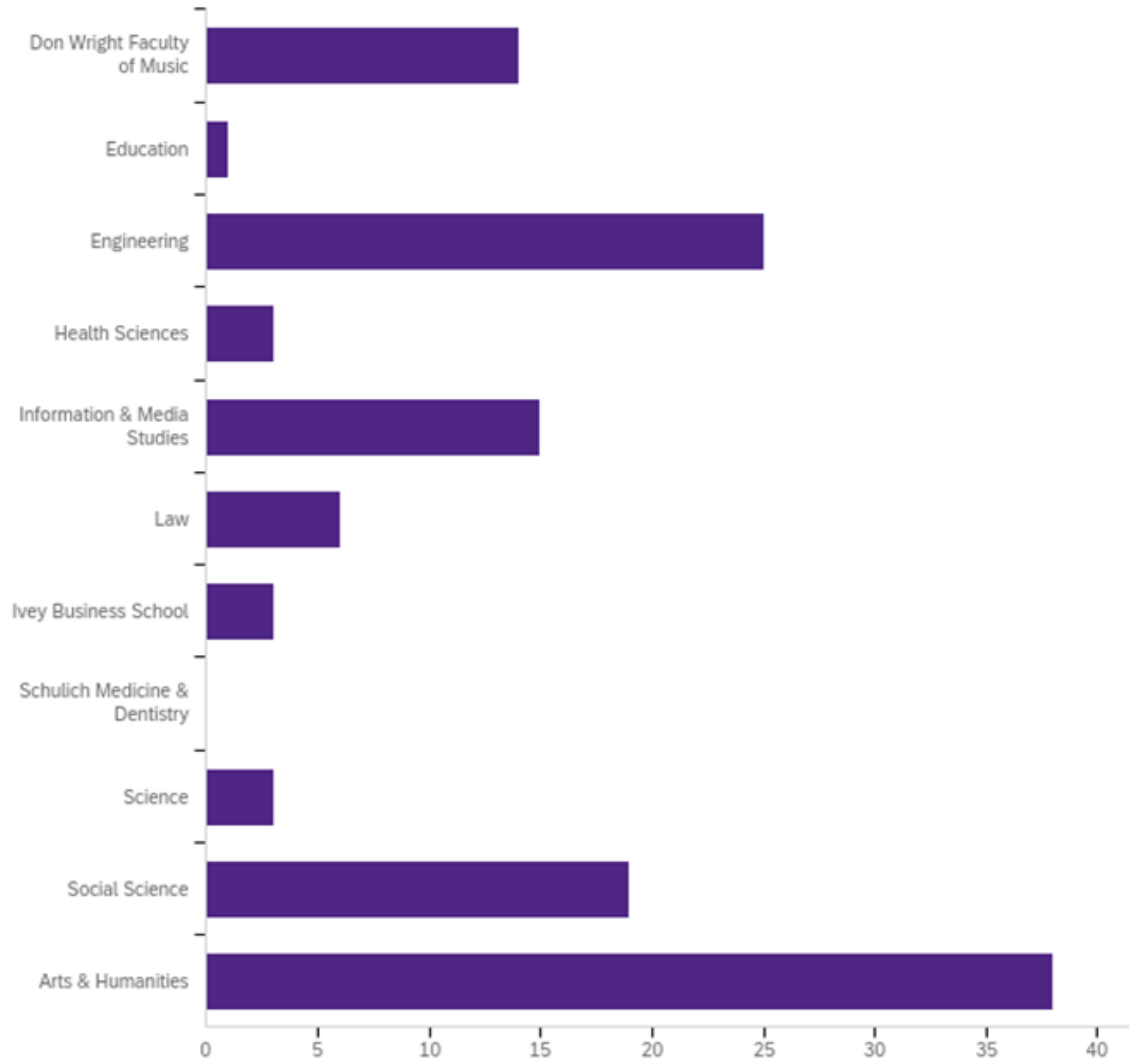
## Survey of Stakeholders

An online survey was used to gather user feedback about HathiTrust ETAS. The survey was distributed through social media, as well as shared with faculty through Libraries' Disciplinary Coordinators. Faculty were encouraged to share the survey with their students.

The survey included 10 questions, of which 5 were shown to respondents only if they were applicable based on previous answers (see Appendix 1). Questions for the survey were predominantly drawn from the University of Ottawa's December 2020 "Assessment of the HathiTrust's Emergency Temporary Access Service" report, though additional questions were added from a previous survey on e-resource use developed by Western Libraries staff.

## Demographics & User Context

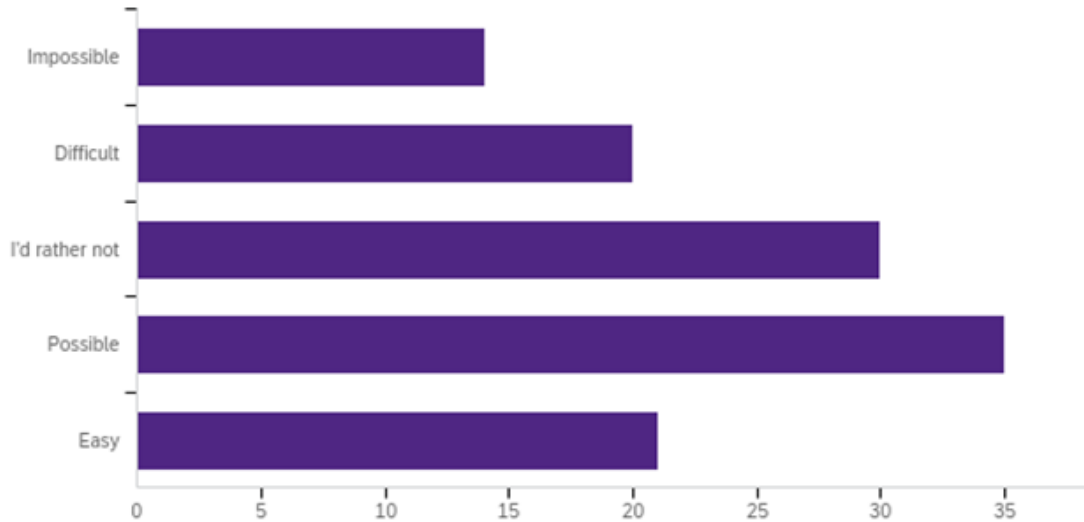
A total of 121 responses were collected. Most faculties and schools were represented; the largest numbers of respondents were affiliated with Arts & Humanities (29.92% of respondents; n=38), Engineering (14.96%; n=19), and Social Sciences (14.96%; n=19)



*Fig 2. Responses to the question "What faculty/school are you affiliated with? If you are affiliated with more than one faculty/school, select all that apply."*

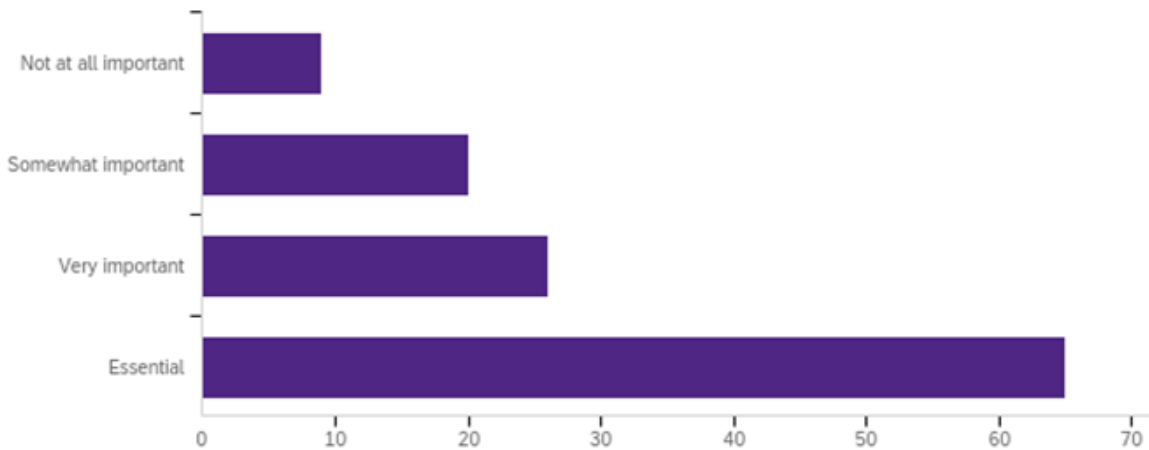
The majority of responses came from Full Time Faculty (32.77% of respondents; n=39), Graduate Students (31.09%; n=37), and Undergraduate Students (28.57%; n=34).

53.34% of respondents rated it "Impossible", "Difficult", or undesirable ("I'd rather not") to come to campus to pick up books or other materials. The majority of respondents who found it "Impossible" or "Difficult" to come to campus identified themselves as Undergraduate or Graduate Students (72.72%; n=24)



*Fig 3. Responses to the question "How feasible is it for you to come to the library in person to pick up books or other material?"*

Respondents tended to agree that access to digital library resources was important to completing their teaching, study, or research, with 92.51% of respondents rating digital library resources as "Somewhat important", "Very important", or "Essential."



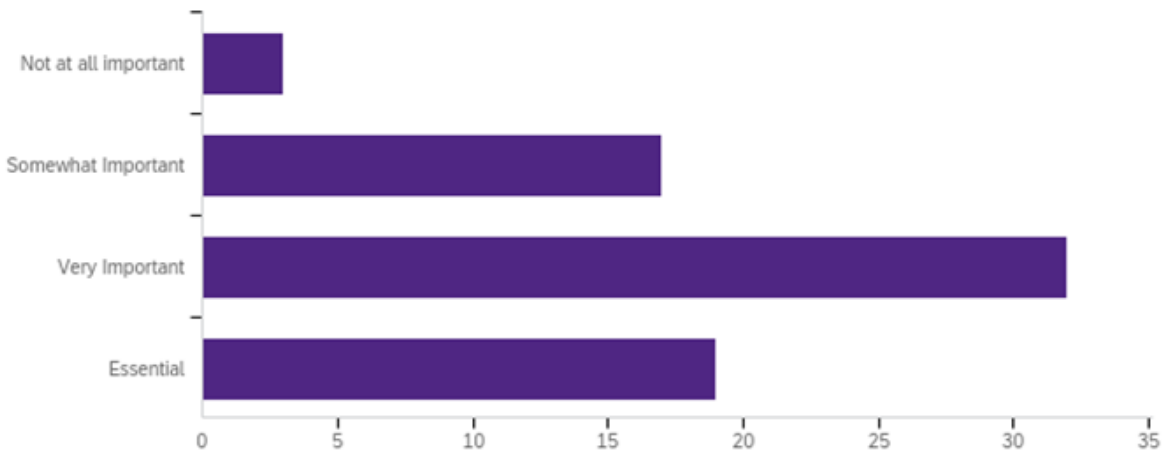
*Fig 4. Responses to the question "How important is access to digital library resources to complete your teaching, study, or research?"*

### Use of HathiTrust ETAS

60% of respondents (n=72) indicated that they had used HathiTrust ETAS. 25% (n=30) had not used the service, and 15% (n=18) were not sure if they had used it or not.

## Users

95.77% (n=68) of respondents who had used the service rated HathiTrust ETAS as at least “Somewhat Important” to their teaching, study, or research.



*Fig 5. Responses to the question “How important has having HathiTrust ETAS service been to your teaching, study, or research?”*

The majority of the open-ended responses to the question “What is the primary reason why you have used the service?” were general comments about its usefulness and convenience for teaching and research. Several comments suggested that respondents were conflating HathiTrust ETAS with the normal HathiTrust service, which may have impacted some responses.

Comments specific to COVID-19 emphasized the relative safety of using online resources during the pandemic, as well as difficulty accessing physical resources on campus.

Several commenters also specified that they had used HathiTrust ETAS because the print versions of the materials they wanted to use were restricted due to the HathiTrust ETAS subscription.

## Nonusers

The most prominent theme in responses to the question “What is the primary reason why you have not used the service?” was that respondents either didn’t know the service existed or weren’t sure how to use it. This, in combination with the relatively high number of respondents who indicated that they were not sure if they had used the service (15%; n=18), indicates a need for continued education and publicity about the service.

Respondents who were aware of the service but chose not to use it tended to state that they either hadn’t needed the service or found it too difficult to use.

## Challenges

40.28% (n=29) of HathiTrust ETAS users reported that they had experienced challenges with the service. Most of the responses to the question “What challenges have you experienced?” described usability issues with the platform. These included performance problems like crashing and issues logging in, as well as design issues like unintuitive navigation.

Other themes included frustration with usage restrictions and a preference for print materials.

## Other Comments

At the end of the survey, all respondents were asked the open-ended question, “What else would you like to tell us about HathiTrust ETAS?” The majority of responses were positive, including comments about the general usefulness of the service as well as comments specific to COVID-19.

Negative comments tended to emphasize usability issues or frustration with the loss of access to print holdings. Two commenters expressed particular concerns about equity and accessibility. There were also several comments that contextualized the usefulness of the service, saying that they were glad to have it now but looked forward to returning to normal services after the pandemic.

One commenter requested additional training on the service, which was supported by several comments from respondents who didn’t know how to access the service.

## Recommendations

- Because of the generally high use of HathiTrust ETAS, as well as the positive ratings of its importance to stakeholders and respondents’ preferences to avoid coming to campus for materials, this report recommends that Western Libraries continue its subscription to HathiTrust ETAS.
- While the majority of respondents expressed positive views of HathiTrust ETAS, many comments in opposition to the service were extremely passionate. Future Libraries communications should be sensitive to the fact that strong opinions exist on both sides of the issue and make an effort to contextualize decisions for users.
- Due to concerns about accessibility, the Libraries should investigate what further steps can be taken to ensure the accessibility of the service.
- Due to the relatively high number of respondents who weren’t sure if they had used the service, as well as confusion in the comments, it is also recommended that Western Libraries explore ways to better publicize HathiTrust ETAS and educate users about the service.
- While of the usability issues reported are out of Western Libraries’ control, it is recommended that the Libraries provide user feedback to HathiTrust to help them continue to improve the product.

## Appendix 1: Survey Instrument

# HathiTrust ETAS

### Start of Block: Default Question Block

Due to COVID-19 and access limitations to physical materials, Western Libraries has joined in [HathiTrust's Emergency Temporary Access Service \(ETAS\)](#) to give members of the Western community access to digitized resources that are part of Western Libraries' print collection and are normally restricted from online viewing due to copyright. This survey is part of our ongoing assessment of HathiTrust ETAS and will take 2-5 minutes to complete. By answering this survey, you help us learn about how you use HathiTrust ETAS and whether the service is meeting your needs. Thank you for sharing your feedback.

If you have questions about HathiTrust ETAS or this survey, please email [library@uwo.ca](mailto:library@uwo.ca).

What faculty/school are you affiliated with? If you are affiliated with more than one faculty/school, select all that apply.

1. Arts & Humanities (12)
2. Don Wright Faculty of Music (2)
3. Education (3)
4. Engineering (4)
5. Health Sciences (5)
6. Information & Media Studies (6)
7. Law (7)
8. Ivey Business School (8)
9. Schulich Medicine & Dentistry (9)
10. Science (10)
11. Social Science (11)

What is your status on campus?

- Full Time Faculty (1)
- Sessional/Part Time Faculty (2)
- Graduate Student (3)

- Undergraduate Student (4)
- Other (please describe) (7) \_\_\_\_\_

How feasible is it for you to come to the library in person to pick up books or other material?

- Impossible (1)
- Difficult (2)
- I'd rather not (3)
- Possible (4)
- Easy (5)

How important is access to digital library resources to complete your teaching, study, or research?

- Not at all important (1)
- Somewhat important (2)
- Very important (4)
- Essential (5)

Since Western Libraries launched its HathiTrust ETAS access, have you used the service?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not Sure (3)

*Display This Question:*

*If Since Western Libraries launched its HathiTrust ETAS access, have you used the service? = Yes*

How important has having HathiTrust ETAS service been to your teaching, study, or research?

- Not at all important (2)
- Somewhat Important (3)
- Very Important (4)
- Essential (5)



*Display This Question:*

*If Since Western Libraries launched its HathiTrust ETAS access, have you used the service? = Yes*

What is the primary reason why you have used the service?

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*Display This Question:*

*If Since Western Libraries launched its HathiTrust ETAS access, have you used the service? = Yes*

Have you experienced any challenges with the service?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not Sure (3)

*Display This Question:*

*If Have you experienced any challenges with the service? = Yes*

What challenges have you experienced?

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*Display This Question:*

*If Since Western Libraries launched its HathiTrust ETAS access, have you used the service? = No*

What is the primary reason why you have not used the service?

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**End of Block: Default Question Block**

**Start of Block: Block 2**

What else would you like to tell us about HathiTrust ETAS?

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**End of Block: Block 2**