

# Web site user survey – report

by Kenny Hermansen, Web Development Officer



## 1. Executive summary

- a. On all key aspects surveyed – quality of content, style and presentation, ease of navigation as well as speed of download – respondents overwhelmingly rated the website favourably.
- b. As a consequence of comments submitted, improvements will be sought for the Intranet and the internal search facility. Other improvements to more minor areas of the site will also be sought.

## 2. Methodology

The survey was conducted online via the School's website between Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2003. Visitors were automatically prompted about whether or not they wished to take part in the survey. A prize draw for a gift certificate to the value of £20 was offered as an incentive to take part. The draw took place on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June and was supervised by Brian Furner. The winning number was drawn with the aid of computerised generation of random numbers. The winner was Janice Ward, a member of staff.

## 3. Definitions

In the following *internal users* refers to current members of the School, i.e. taught students, research students and staff. *External users* are defined as prospective students, alumni and other visitors.

## 4. Summary of quantitative findings

- a. A total of 1,012 entries were submitted and of these 60% were external users.
- b. As would be expected, internal users make more frequent use of the web site than external users, with more than 60% of respondents reporting that they use the site on a daily basis.
- c. Although the vast majority of users were located within Europe it is notable that almost half of external users were located outside Europe at the time they took part in the survey, in particular North America, Africa as well as Asia and the Pacific.
- d. The majority of users report accessing the site through fast, high-bandwidth connections although a significant minority, about one quarter, still use low-bandwidth modem connections.

- e. Users rate all aspects of the site – quality of content, style and presentation, ease of navigation as well as speed of download – very highly. More than 70% of responses were favourable in all four categories. Generally, less than 5% of responses were unfavourable, although 8.5% of responses reported unfavourably with respect to ease of navigation.

## **5. Summary of significant qualitative findings (existing site)**

- a. Of those that chose to leave comments, a substantial number did so about style and presentation. The issue did, however, divide users fairly evenly; the presentation was described in every way from ‘bold’ to ‘bland’. Some liked the relatively large choice of font and the ‘clean’ and uncluttered layout, with the clarity that affords – others very much dislike the dark blue colour used, found the default font size too large or the layout boring and old-fashioned.
- b. Respondents generally, and external respondents in particular, felt the structure of the site to be logical and easy to navigate. Some internal respondents did, however, report difficulty in locating resources on the Intranet, in particular forms.
- c. The dynamic features of the site homepage – its news stories and decorative images – were highly appreciated by users, although the font size chosen for stories was found to be too small for some external users and internal users called for more frequent rotation of both stories and images.
- d. Internal users frequently called for the facility to access the Intranet when outside the School.
- e. External users were appreciative of the tendency of pages to download fast, although a small number of respondents, including internal, complained that download was too slow. Given that the main factor in prohibitive download times is images, it was notable that many respondents were calling for more images and graphics on the site.
- f. In line with previously received feedback, internal respondents in particular were calling for improved search facilities on the site.

## **6. Summary of significant qualitative findings (forthcoming work)**

- a. Respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of the proposed work and agreed that the areas identified as needing further work were indeed the key areas that warrant attention.
- b. Making available the database of School publications was seen as the most critical aspect by a high number of respondents. Where available, it was felt there should be links to the online version of the publication.
- c. The existing staff profiles were seen as a useful and key resource but users were frustrated by the incomplete state of the resource; a number of staff still have no profile available or have submitted incomplete data. Some felt that submitting a complete profile should be made a more formal requirement of staff.
- d. Some members of staff expressed that they were uncomfortable with sharing details such as their contact details or their room number with the external

world. Some reported an increase in distracting email communications from external users since the launch of the new site in December 2002. While these respondents felt it was important that their contact details be available to other internal users, it was suggested that a method be found that would allow staff to choose to deny external access to their contact details.

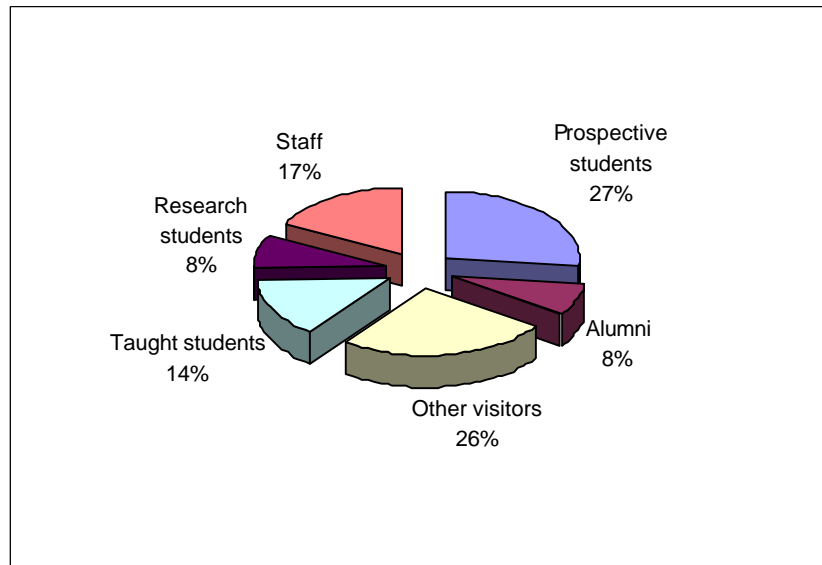
- e. Some students expressed the hope that they too would be offered the opportunity to submit a profile for the website.

## **7. Conclusions and action points**

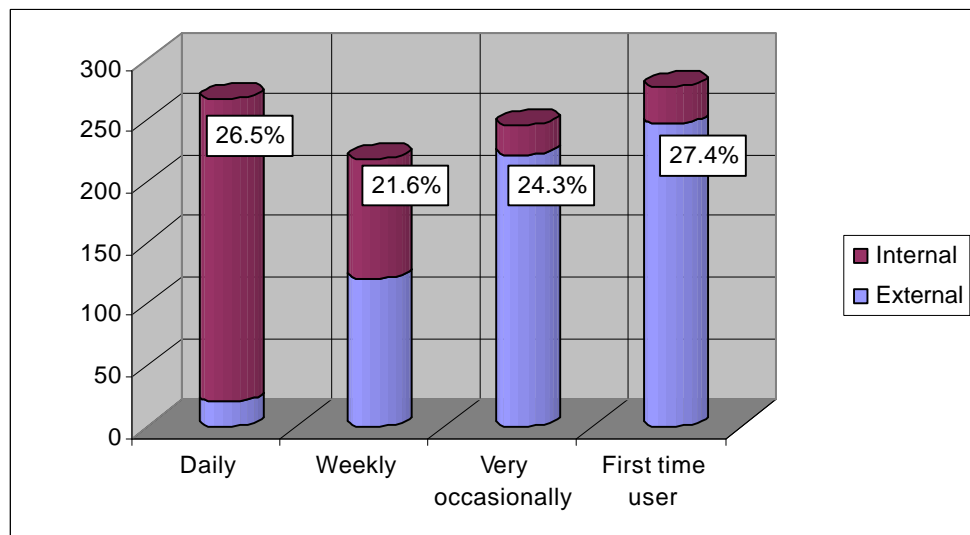
- a. All aspects of the site were regarded positively by respondents. Although a significant number of negative comments were made about style and presentation there were also an equally significant amount of positive comments made on this aspect. More importantly, 78% of respondents overall rated the style and presentation favourably, with only 5% rating this aspect unfavourably. Clearly style and presentation are matters of taste and it will not be possible to satisfy all users. Although continual improvements to style and presentation will be made there is therefore no further action required in this respect.
- b. Improvements to the Intranet with respect to navigation and eased access to frequently used resources shall be sought. *Priority: long-term.* A method allowing access to the Intranet from the outside shall be investigated. *Priority: medium-term.*
- c. The rotation of dynamic features on the homepage – the news stories and decorative images – relies entirely on independent supply. Virtually all submitted material is used in the rotation. With current levels of resources it is therefore not going to be possible to rotate on a more frequent basis. The choice of font size for news stories on the homepage shall be investigated. *Priority: medium-term.*
- d. Although there were frequent calls for more images to be used on the site it is unavoidable that the use of images comes at the expense of download speed. This is a particular concern as the School website attracts an unusually high proportion of visitors from countries with poor Internet connections. The use of images will therefore continue to be employed with restraint. To aid the diversity and creative use of images an increase in the pool of available images will be sought. *Priority: medium-term.*
- e. Improvements to the search facilities on the site are under investigation and expected relatively soon. *Priority: short-term.*
- f. Suggestions intended to inform forthcoming work will be discussed with the Chair of ISAG. *Priority: short-term.*

## 8. Diagrams of quantitative findings

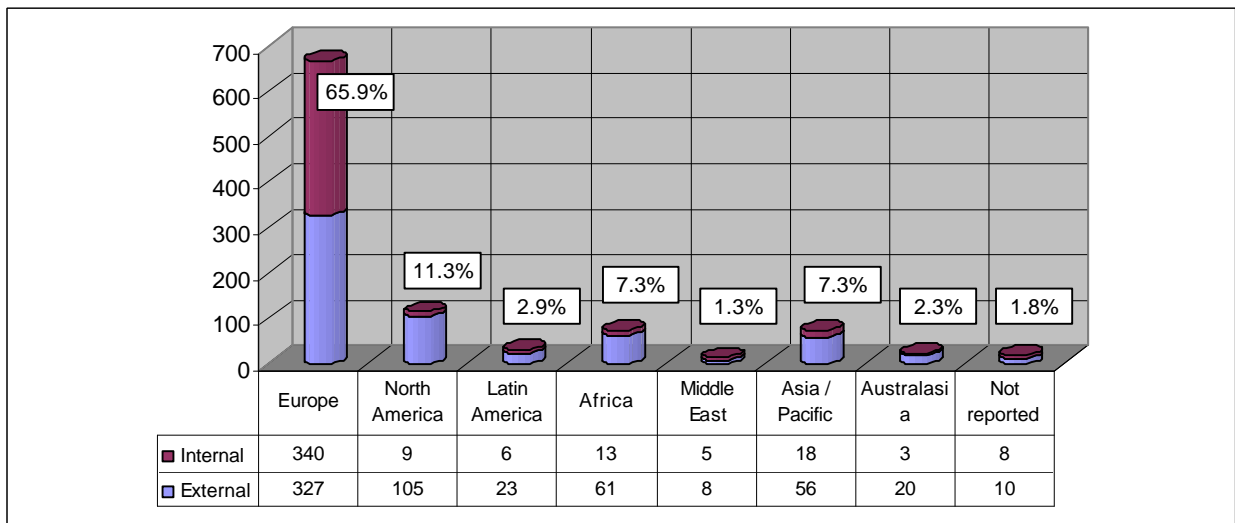
### a. "Your status?"



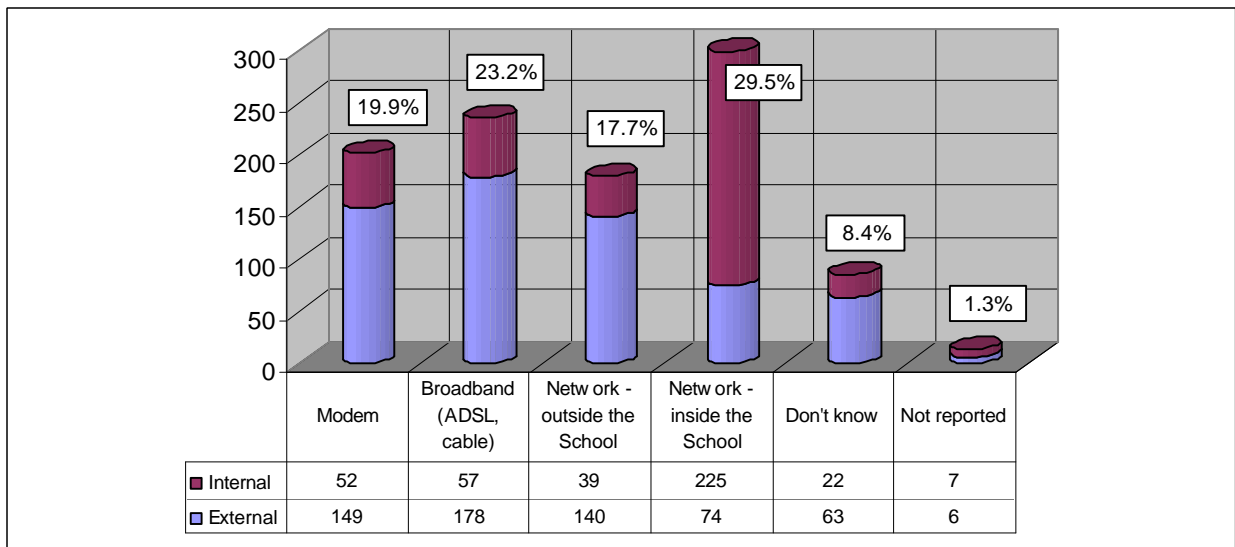
### b. "How often do you visit this web site?"



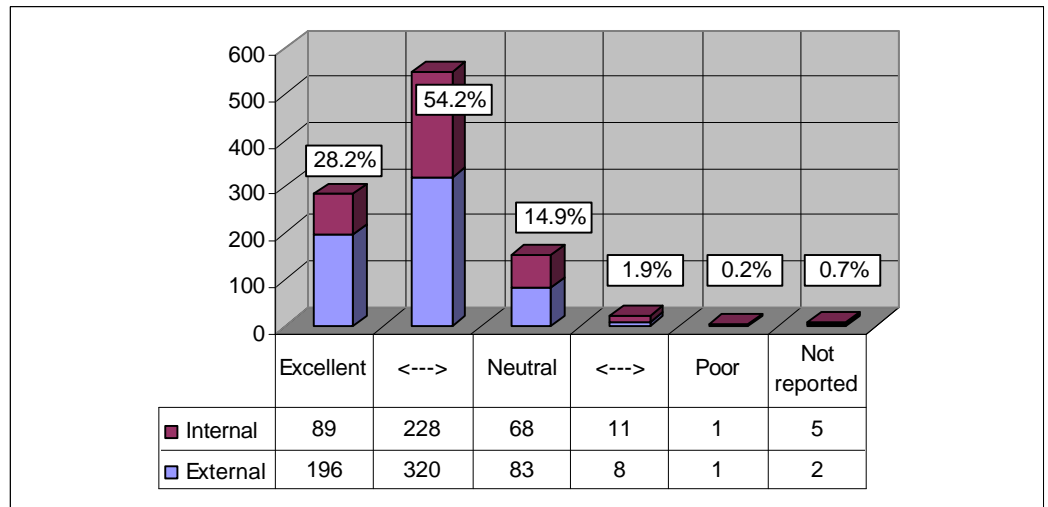
c. "What is your current geographic region?"



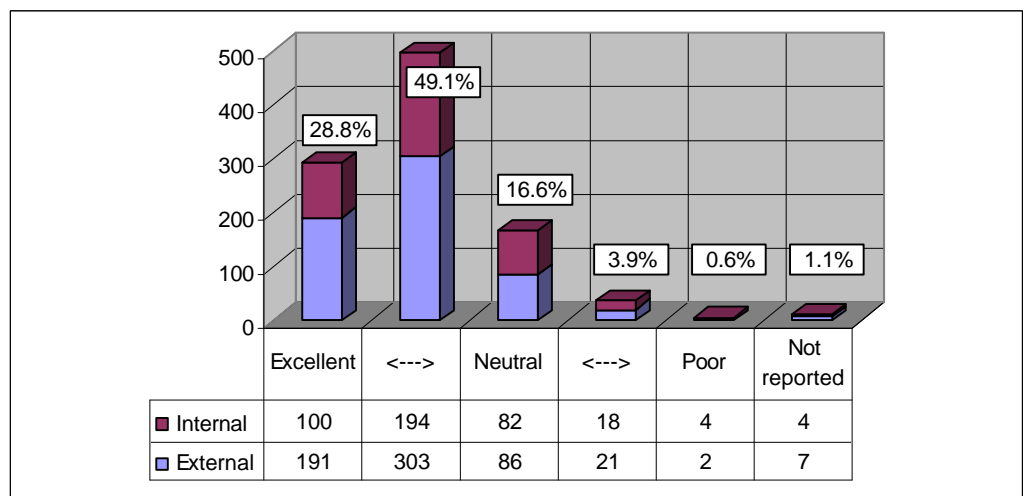
d. "What type of Internet connection are you using at this moment?"



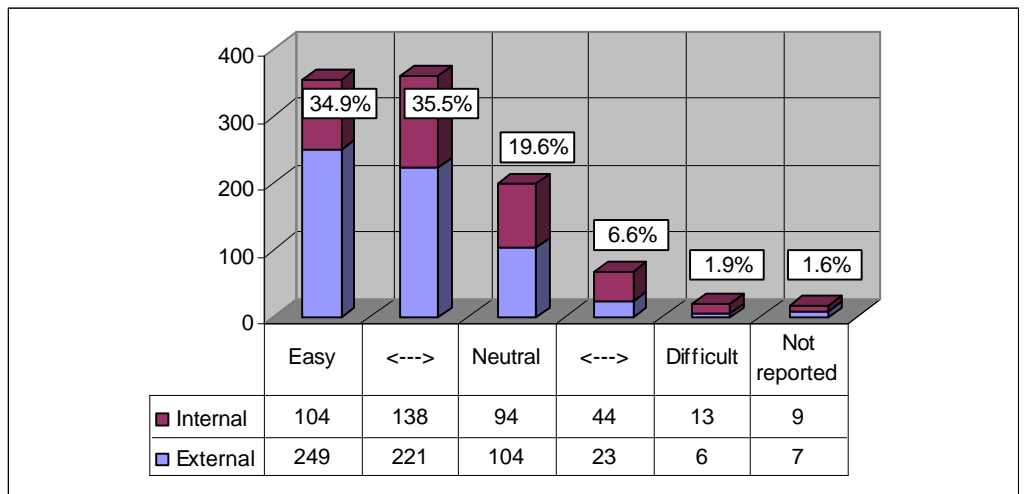
- e. “How do you rate this web site in terms of:  
 i. - quality of content?”



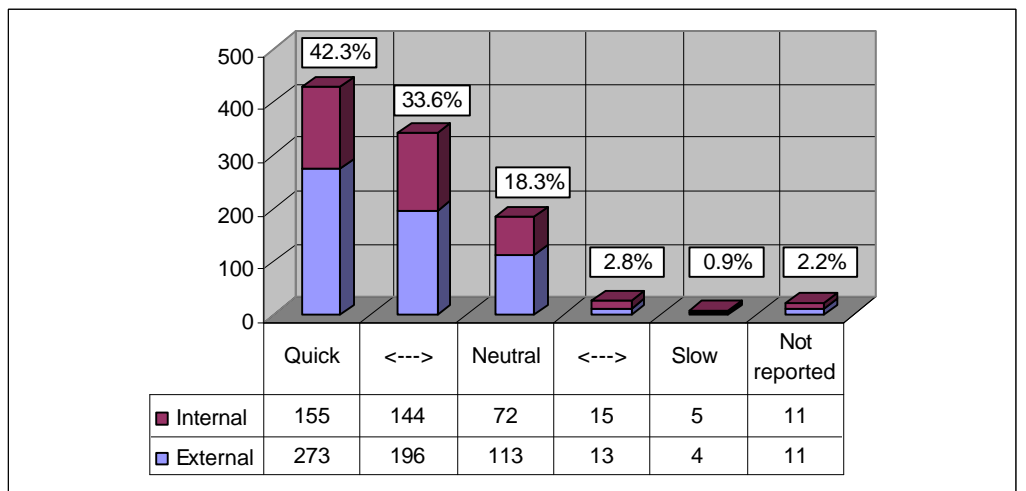
- ii. - style and presentation?”



iii. - navigating around the site?"



iv. - time to download pages?"



## 9. Qualitative findings

All comments made through the survey (excluding comments such as “N/A” or “Don’t know”) are available at <http://intra.lshtm.ac.uk/web/survey> (access restricted to internal users only).

## Appendix A – Online questionnaire

We are currently conducting research to determine what visitors think about our web site. After you finish looking at the site we would like you to complete a short survey.

Would you like to participate?

Yes – No

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Please return to this window when you have finished looking at our web site. In the meantime you can minimise this window.

When ready please choose the type of visitor you are from the list below.

### **External visitor**

Prospective student

Alumni

Other visitor

### **Current member of the School**

Taught student

Research student

Staff

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## **About you**

1. Your status?

- Prospective student
- Alumni
- Other external visitor to the site
- Taught student
- Research student
- Staff

2. How often do you visit this web site?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Very occasionally
- First time user

3. What is your current geographic region?

- Europe
- North America

- Latin America and Caribbean
- Africa
- Middle East
- Asia and the Pacific
- Australasia

4. What type of Internet connection are you using at this moment:
- Modem
  - Broadband (ADSL, cable, etc)
  - Network - inside the School
  - Network - outside the School
  - Don't know

### **About this web site**

5. How do you rate this web site in terms of:
- quality of content? (scale from 1-5; 1=excellent to 5=poor)
  - style and presentation? (scale from 1-5; 1=excellent to 5=poor)
  - navigating around the site? (scale from 1-5; 1=easy to 5=difficult)
  - time to download pages? (scale from 1-5; 1=quick to 5=slow)
6. What do you like the **most** about this web site?  
(*open-ended box*)
7. What do you like the **least** about this web site?  
(*open-ended box*)
8. If you could change **one thing** about this web site, what would it be?  
(*open-ended box*)
9. Please share any other **comments** or **suggestions** you may have concerning this web site.  
(*open-ended box*)

### **About forthcoming work**

*For current members of the School*

10. Work will commence shortly to enhance selected facilities on the web site:
- **Staff profiles** - enabling staff to create and update their own profile on an ongoing basis
  - **Publications** - enabling searching of the School's publications database and possibly facilitating automatic inclusion of relevant entries on staff profiles
  - **Events, news and vacancies** - enabling relevant staff to submit entries directly and facilitate searching of entries

Please outline any **comments** or **suggestions** you have that might inform this work.  
(*open-ended box*)

### **About the prize draw**

Finally, if you would like to be entered into the prize draw for a **gift certificate to the value of £20 or equivalent**, please enter your email address.

*(open-ended box)*

*Your answers will still be treated anonymously and your email address will be used only for the purposes of the draw*

**Data Protection Act**

The information supplied on this form will be used by the School for the exclusive purposes of generating statistics and conducting the draw. To aid these purposes the information will also be retained by the School on a database.