

Really Simple Syndication? Faculty and Residents' Adoption of RSS Feeds Following an Instruction Session

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Introduction:

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) has been described in library and information science literature as a simple and effective technology for maintaining current awareness.

For professionals in the health sciences who are pressed for time and struggle with the volume of new information, RSS may be an ideal information management tool.

However, little research evidence exists on whether or not health sciences professionals are aware of or make use of RSS feeds.

We hypothesized that offering instruction on RSS would be useful to health sciences faculty and medical residents, and would lead to increased use of RSS.

Research Questions:

- Are health sciences faculty and medical residents currently using RSS?
- If faculty and residents are taught how to use RSS feeds, will they use them?
- What barriers or benefits do they encounter in using RSS for current awareness?
- Is classroom instruction on new technologies a good use of resources?

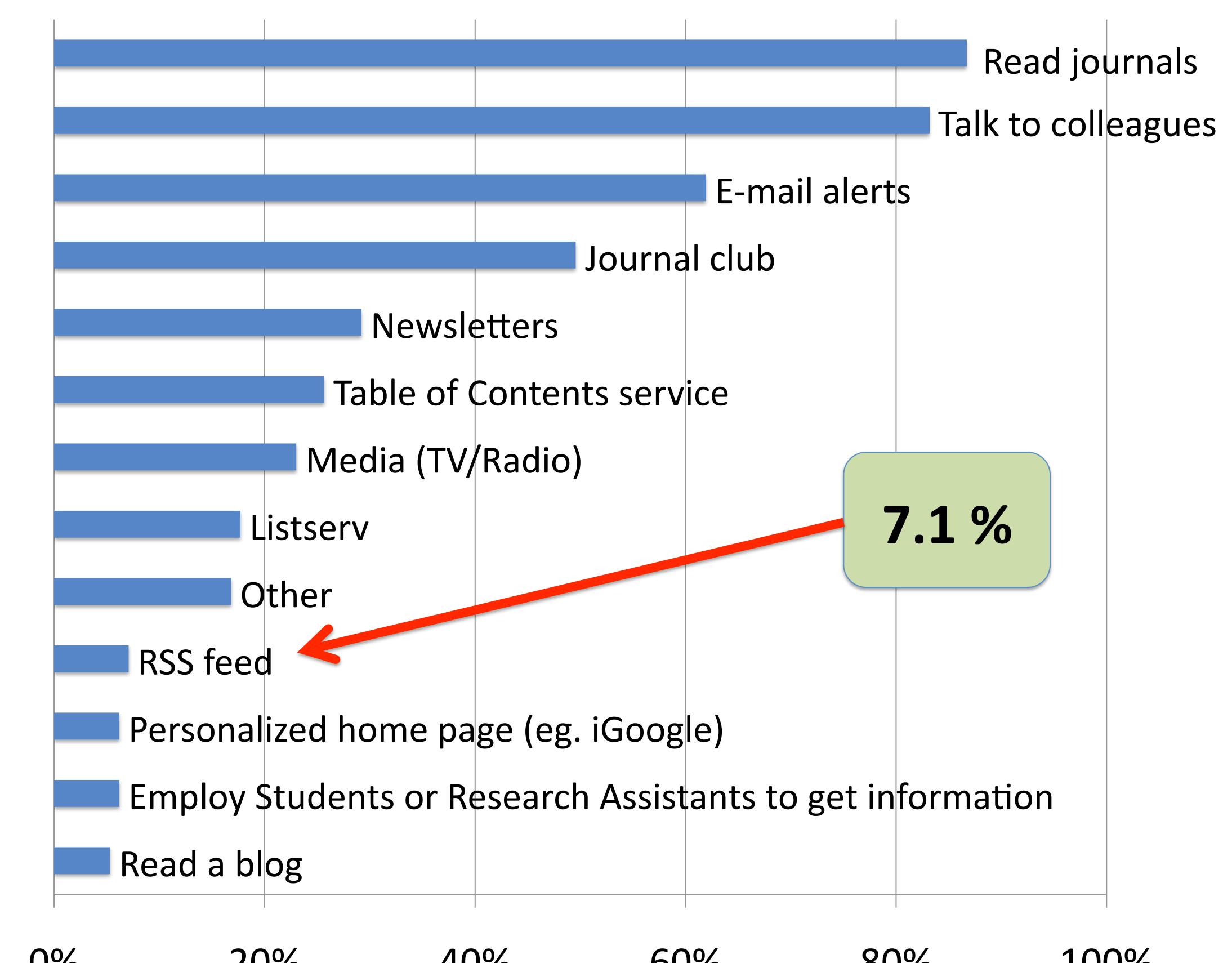
Methods:

- Conducted general survey of all health sciences faculty members and medical residents at the University of Alberta
- Offered face-to-face instruction sessions
 - Pre-class survey
 - Post-class evaluation form
- Conducted follow-up survey 2 months after instruction

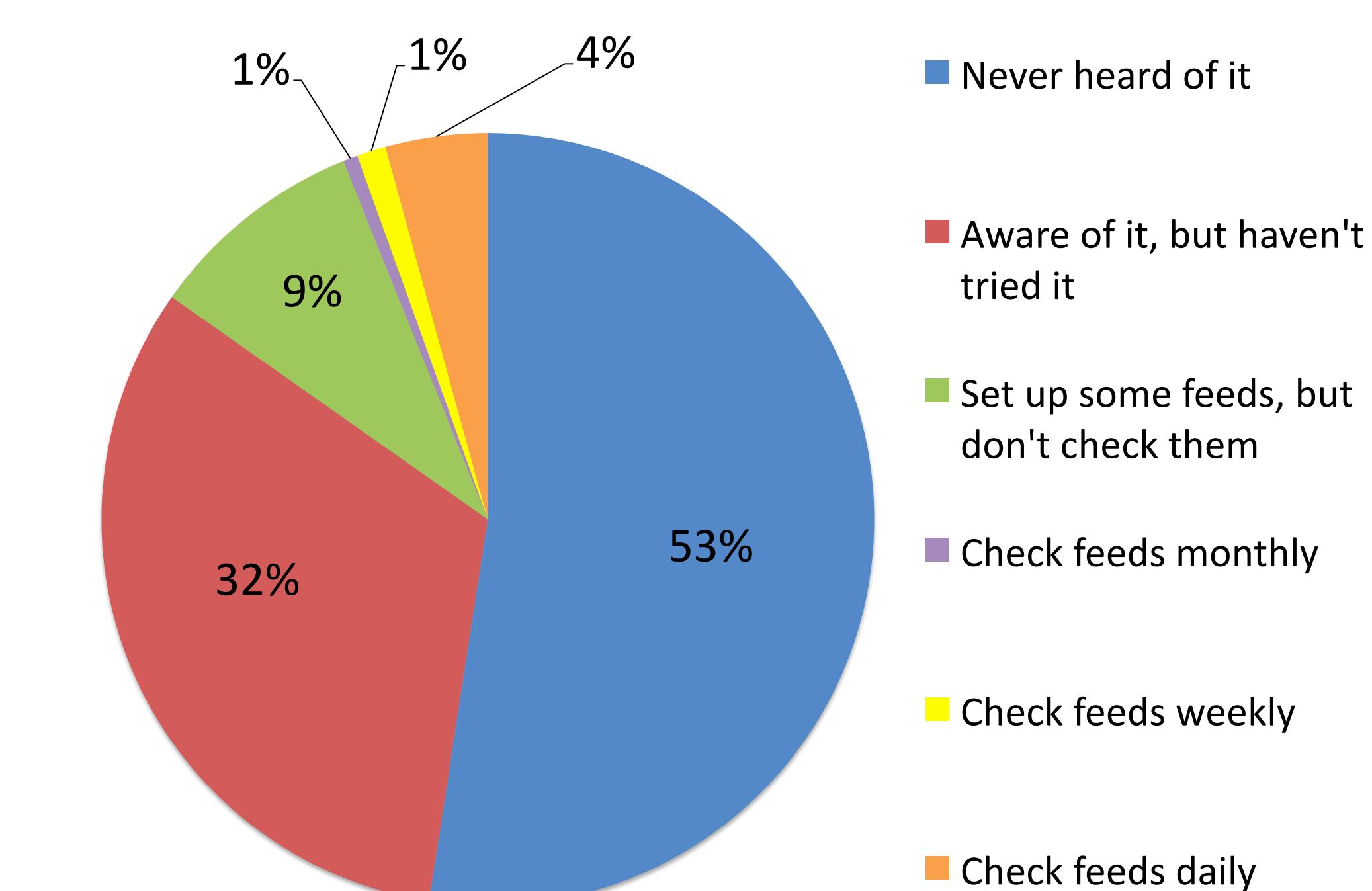
General Survey

- Administered through Survey Monkey
- Sent to 3194 faculty members, clinical instructors, and medical residents from five faculties
- 164 respondents
 - Medicine and Dentistry (& residents) (65%)
 - Nursing (28%)
 - Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (4%)
 - Rehabilitation Medicine (2%)
 - School of Public Health (1%)

Current awareness preferences (n=113)



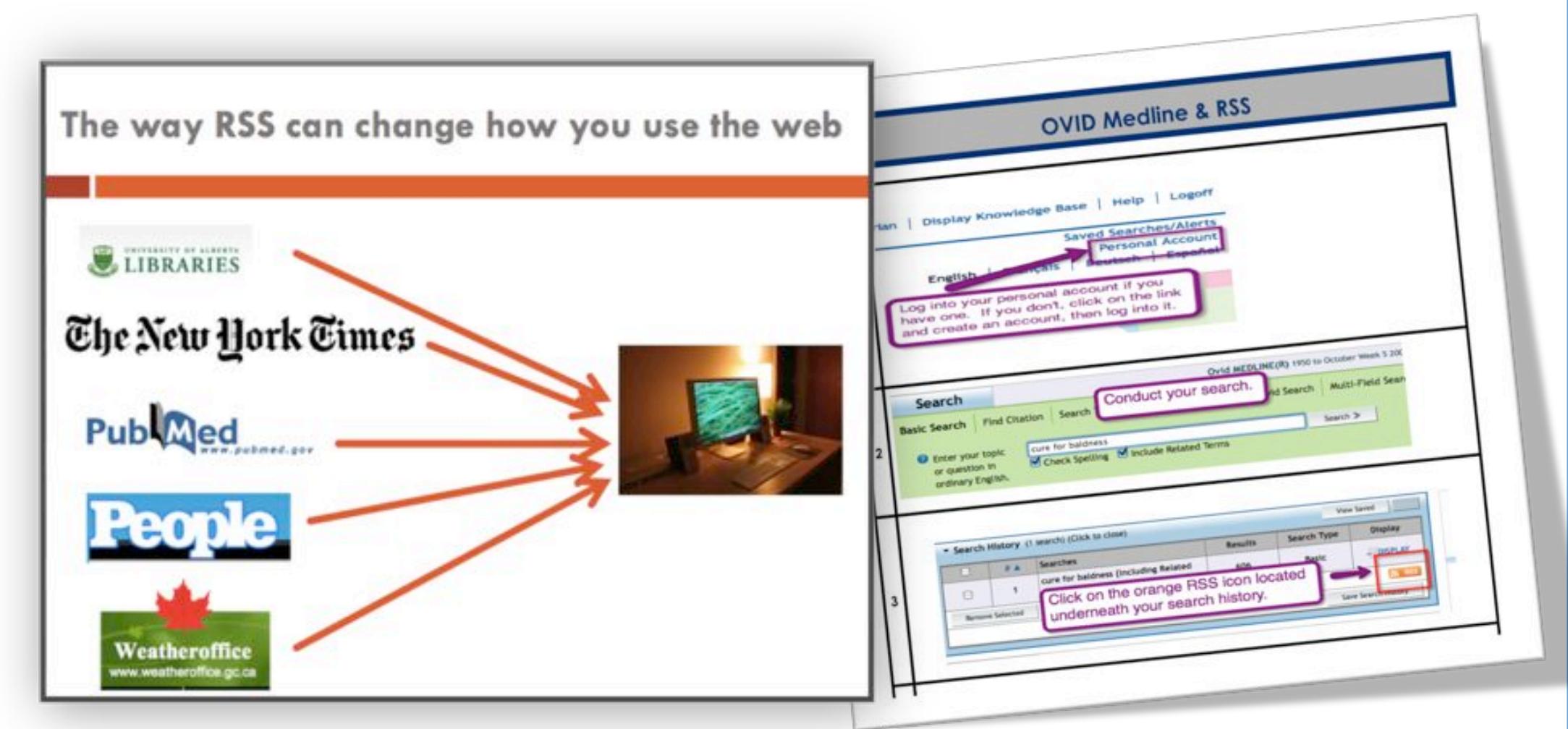
RSS use (n=164)



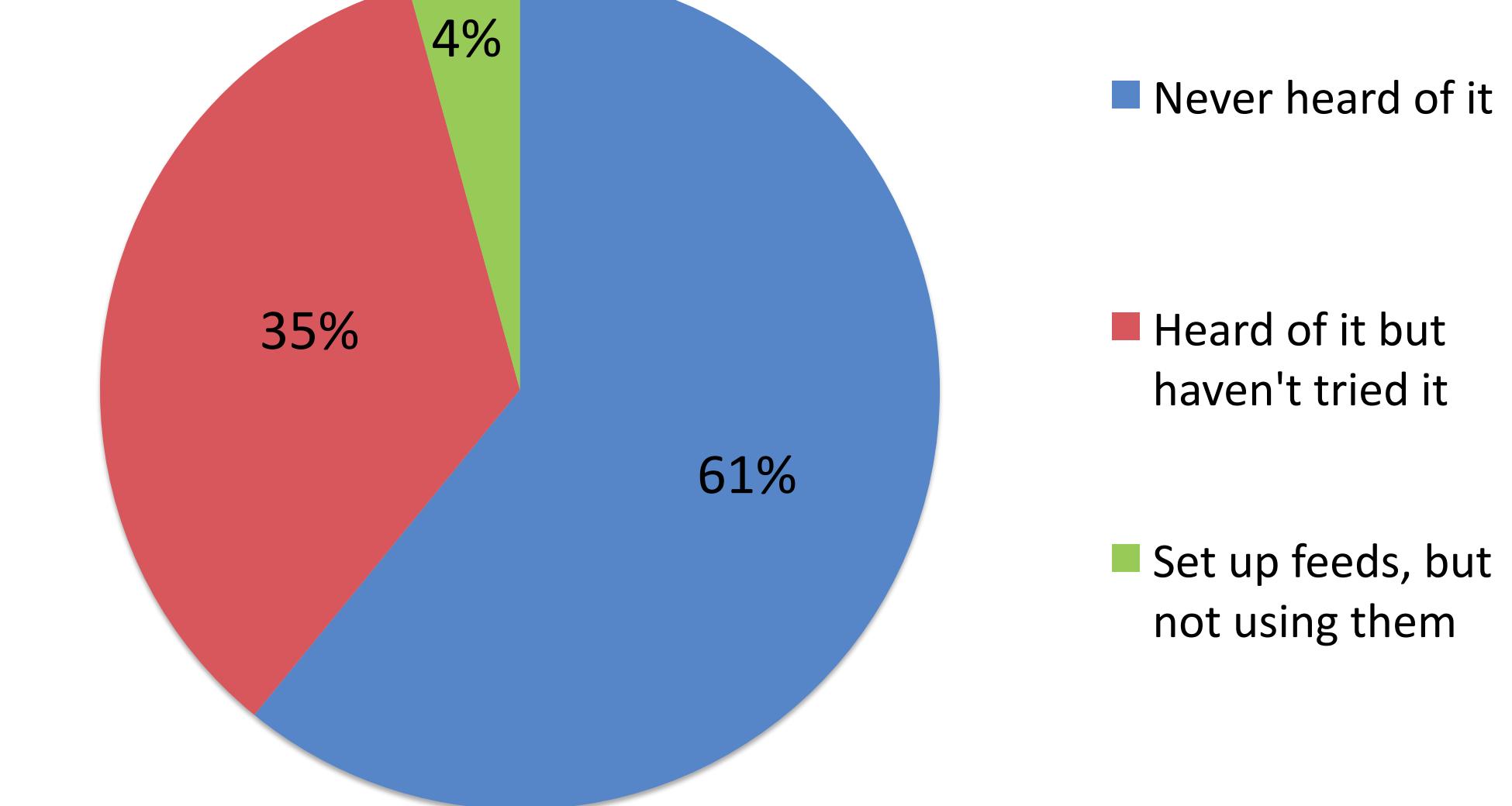
Instruction Sessions

- Offered session four times, 32 attendees overall
- 23 attendees were faculty and residents
 - Medicine and Dentistry (& residents) (70%)
 - Nursing (22%)
 - Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (0%)
 - Rehabilitation Medicine (4%)
 - School of Public Health (4%)
- 50 minute hands-on workshop, supported by roving instructors and handouts

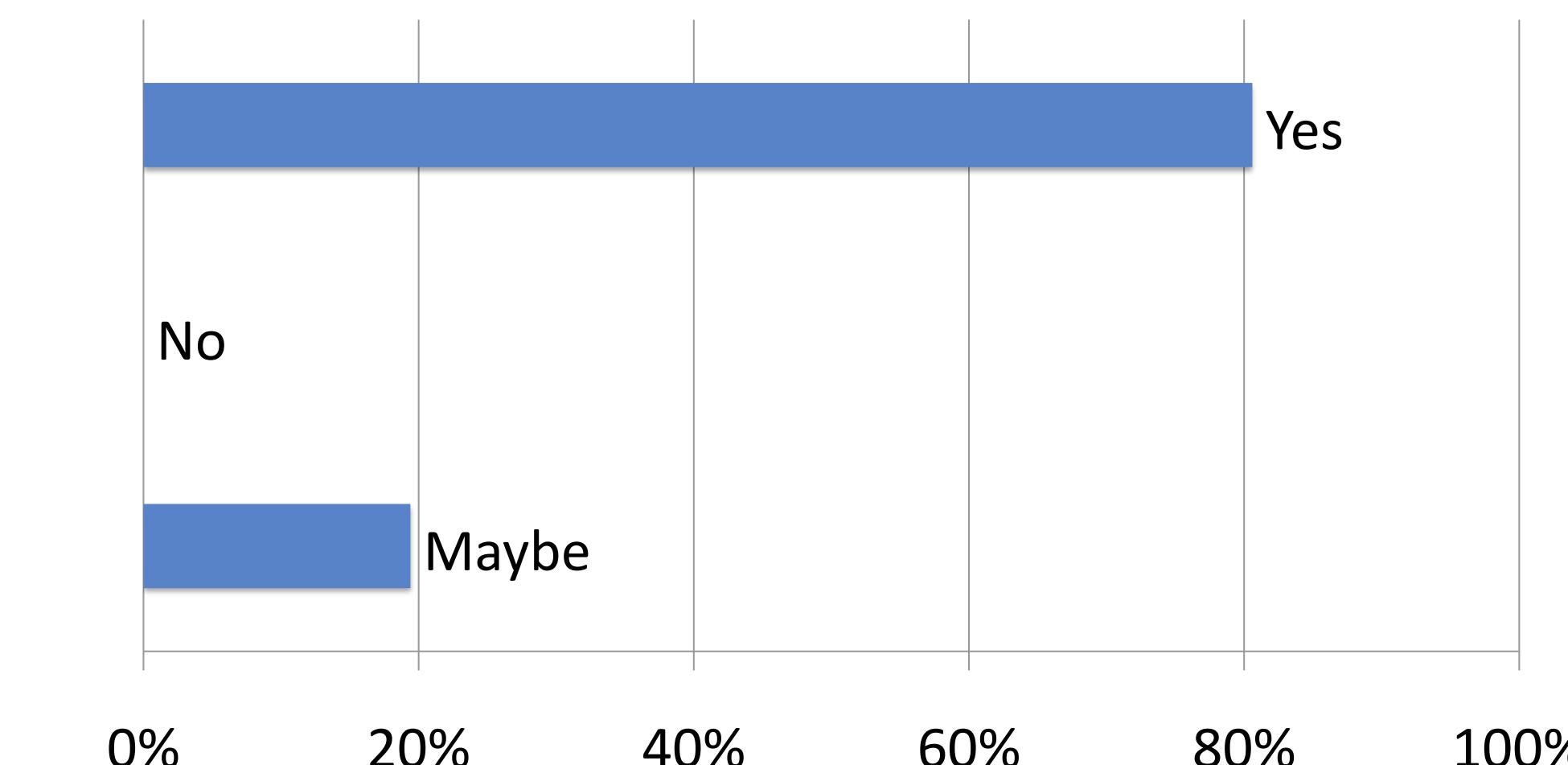
Images of Presentation Slides and Handout



RSS use prior to class (n=23)



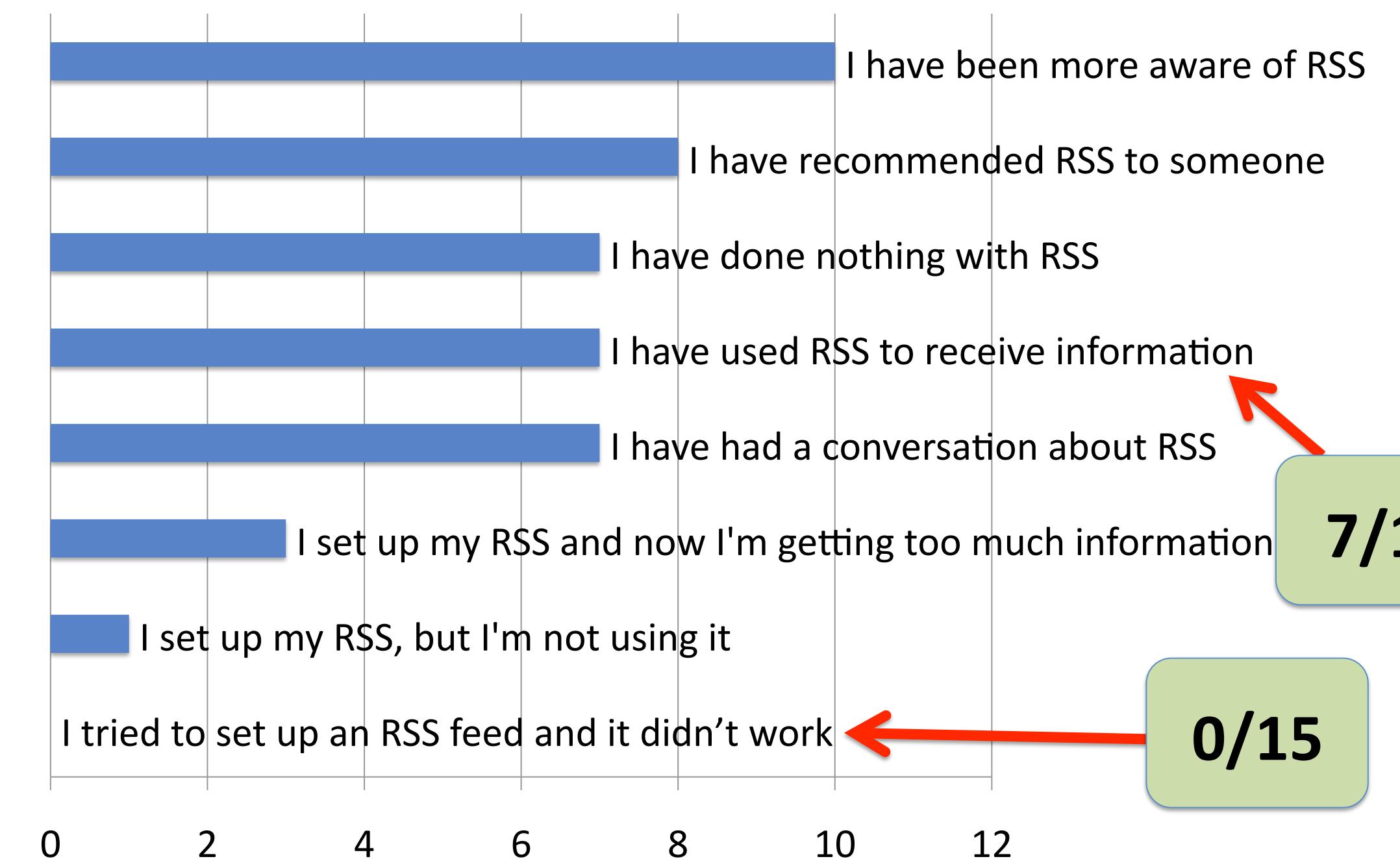
Do you think that you will use RSS? (n=23)



Follow-Up Survey

- Online survey sent out approximately 2 months after instruction sessions
- 23 respondents, 15 were faculty members and residents

RSS awareness and use 2 months after instruction (n=15)



Comments about RSS

- "I have not had time to fully implement it."
- "A bit overwhelming having so much information coming in every day."
- "I have done nothing personally with RSS feeds, but have passed on the benefit to others working in my research group."
- "I think it is fantastic and that all university students should get this RSS awareness class and all faculty and staff should too."

Conclusion:

RSS is a fairly simple technology, but some people just do not have the time or resources to learn it by themselves. Therefore, there is benefit gained from receiving formal instruction on new technologies. 7 out of 15 attendees went from being non-users to users of RSS, while others passed on what they learned to other people.

Using RSS did help some users better organize new information, but it clearly was not a cure-all for information overload and lack of time.