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# Print Versus Electronic Reading Preferences in South Africa: a Case Study at Three South African Universities

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**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND**
*RESTRUCTURED FOR RELEVANCE*

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

UNISA | university of south africa

# Overview

- Background to ARFIS
- SA participants
- Presentation of selected data
  - Quantitative
    - Comparison of three universities
    - Comparison of three UP groups
  - Qualitative
    - Limited, no detailed analysis
- Conclusions

# Background to ARFIS

- "Academic Reading Format International Study"
  - Started by Diane Mizrachi at UCLA in 2014
  - Current coordinators Diane Mizrachi, Joumana Boustany and Serap Kurbanoglu
  - Standardised questionnaire
- 32 countries and counting
- Details of project at http://arfis.co/
  - Full list of ARFIS publications
  - Extended bibliography

# Questionnaire

- Six demographic questions
- 17 Likert-style statements on academic reading behaviours and preferences
- All questions include a box for optional comments
- An open prompt for any further information
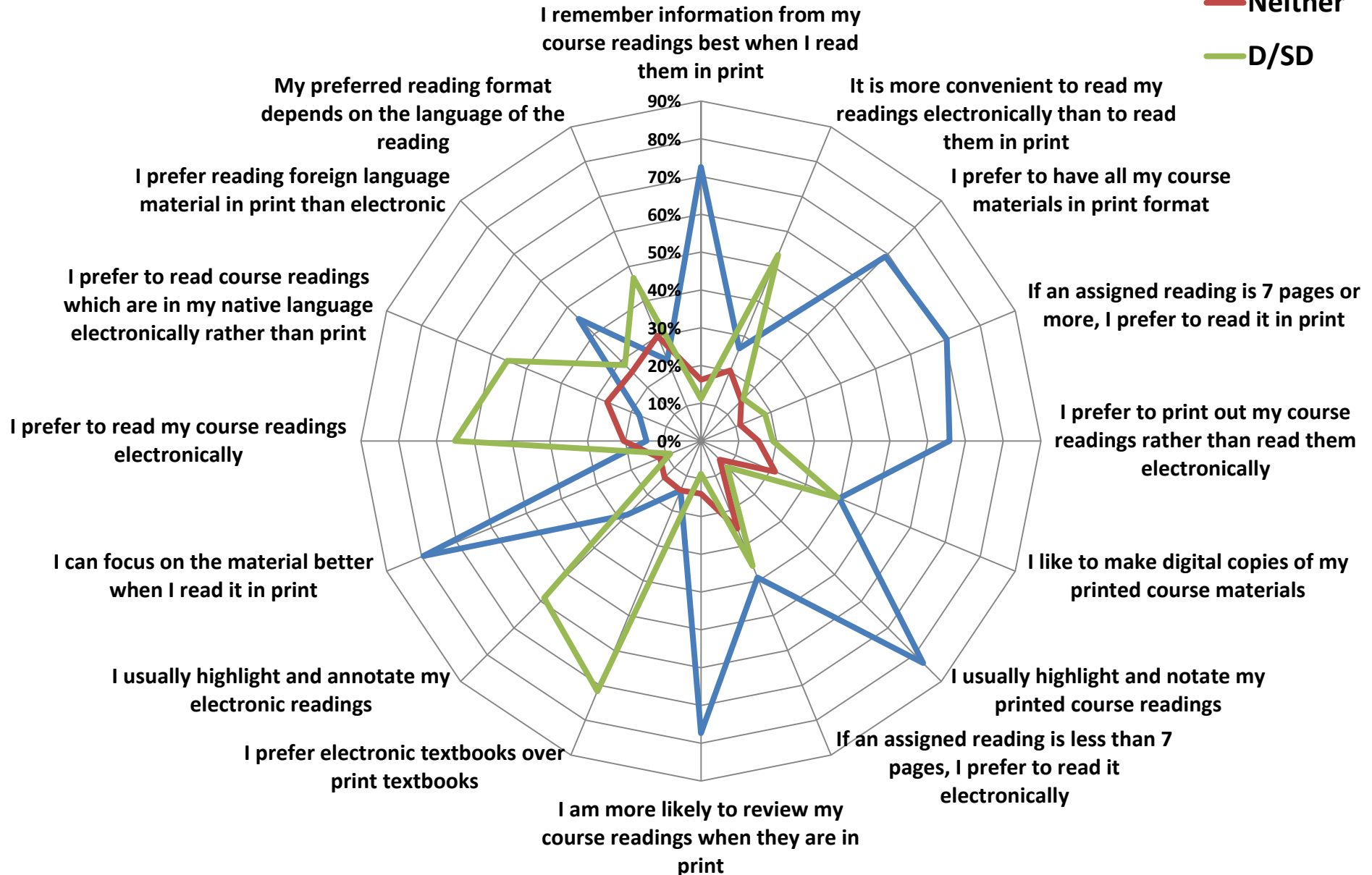
# SA participants

- University of Pretoria (UP)
  - City residential university
  - 55,000 students
- University of South Africa (UNISA)
  - Distance education university
  - 450,000 students
- University of Zululand (UniZulu)
  - Rural residential university
  - 16,000 students

# Respondents

- University of Pretoria
  - Three groups
    - First-year students that do a compulsory computer/information literacy module (who have only e-books as course materials)
      - 2,941 valid responses
    - Undergraduate students form the Department of Information Science (years 2 and 3)
      - 208 valid responses
    - Postgraduate – Honours (year 4), Masters and doctoral
      - 79 valid responses
- University of South Africa
  - Students doing a module on "Developing information skills for lifelong learning" (typically years 3 and 4)
  - 70 responses
  - Between 25 and 40+ years old
- University of Zululand
  - Two groups
    - Humanities undergraduate
    - DIS undergraduate and postgraduate
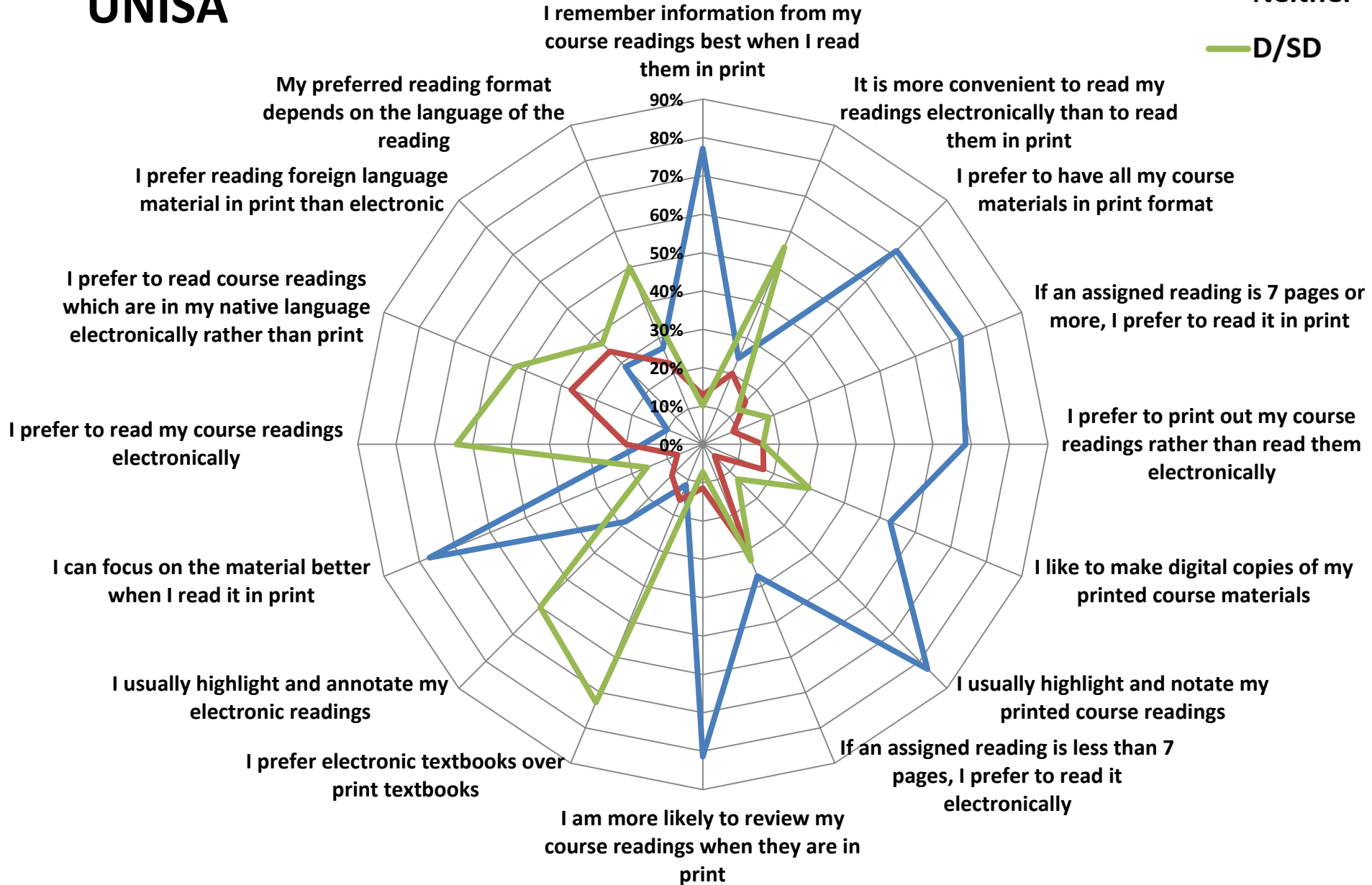  - 20 responses and on-going – logistical problems

# Univ. of Pretoria



Legend:
- SA/A (blue)
- Neither (red)
- D/SD (green)

Radar chart axes (clockwise from top):
- I remember information from my course readings best when I read them in print
- It is more convenient to read my readings electronically than to read them in print
- I prefer to have all my course materials in print format
- If an assigned reading is 7 pages or more, I prefer to read it in print
- I prefer to print out my course readings rather than read them electronically
- I like to make digital copies of my printed course materials
- I usually highlight and notate my printed course readings
- If an assigned reading is less than 7 pages, I prefer to read it electronically
- I am more likely to review my course readings when they are in print
- I prefer electronic textbooks over print textbooks
- I usually highlight and annotate my electronic readings
- I can focus on the material better when I read it in print
- I prefer to read my course readings electronically
- I prefer to read course readings which are in my native language electronically rather than print
- I prefer reading foreign language material in print than electronic
- My preferred reading format depends on the language of the reading

Radial scale: 0% to 90% (in 10% increments)

UNISA

Legend:
- SA/A (blue)
- Neither (red)
- D/SD (green)

Axis labels (clockwise from top):
- I remember information from my course readings best when I read them in print
- It is more convenient to read my readings electronically than to read them in print
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- I prefer reading foreign language material in print than electronic
- My preferred reading format depends on the language of the reading

Radial scale: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%

# UniZulu



**Legend:**
- SA/A
- Neither
- D/SD

**Axis labels (clockwise from top):**
- I remember information from my course readings best when I read them in print
- It is more convenient to read my readings electronically than to read them in print
- I prefer to have all my course materials in print format
- If an assigned reading is 7 pages or more, I prefer to read it in print
- I prefer to print out my course readings rather than read them electronically
- I like to make digital copies of my printed course materials
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- I am more likely to review my course readings when they are in print
- I prefer electronic textbooks over print textbooks
- I usually highlight and annotate my electronic readings
- I can focus on the material better when I read it in print
- I prefer to read my course readings electronically
- I prefer to read course readings which are in my native language electronically rather than print
- I prefer reading foreign language material in print than electronic
- My preferred reading format depends on the language of the reading

**Radial scale:** 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%

# Comparison – SA/A (1)

| | I remember information from my course readings best when I read them in print | It is more convenient to read my readings electronically than to read them in print | I prefer to have all my course materials in print format | If an assigned reading is 7 pages or more, I prefer to read it in print | I prefer to print out my course readings rather than read them electronically | I like to make digital copies of my printed course materials | I usually highlight and notate my printed course readings | If an assigned reading is less than 7 pages, I prefer to read it electronically |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UP | 73% | 26% | 69% | 70% | 66% | 40% | 83% | 39% |
| UNISA | 77% | 24% | 71% | 73% | 69% | 53% | 83% | 37% |
| UniZulu | 55% | 30% | 30% | 30% | 35% | 45% | 75% | 55% |

# Comparison – SA/A (2)

| | I am more likely to review my course readings when they are in print | I prefer electronic textbooks over print textbooks | I usually highlight and annotate my electronic readings | I can focus on the material better when I read it in print | I prefer to read my course readings electroni-cally | I prefer to read course readings which are in my native language electronic-ally rather than print | I prefer reading foreign language material in print rather than electronic-ally | My preferred reading format depends on the language of the reading |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UP | 77% | 14% | 28% | 80% | 14% | 18% | 46% | 23% |
| UNISA | 81% | 11% | 29% | 77% | 16% | 10% | 29% | 27% |
| UniZulu | 55% | 30% | 70% | 55% | 35% | 25% | 25% | 35% |

UP:
I remember information from my course readings best when I read them from printed pages
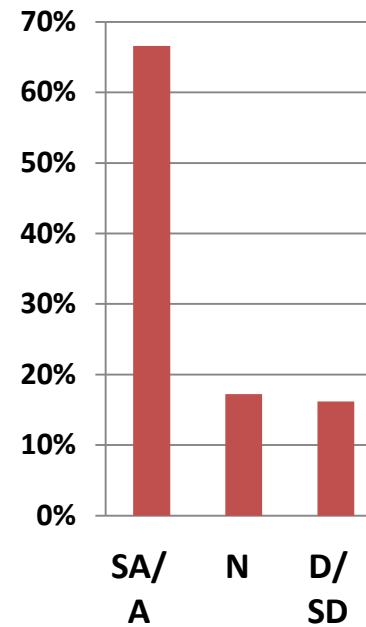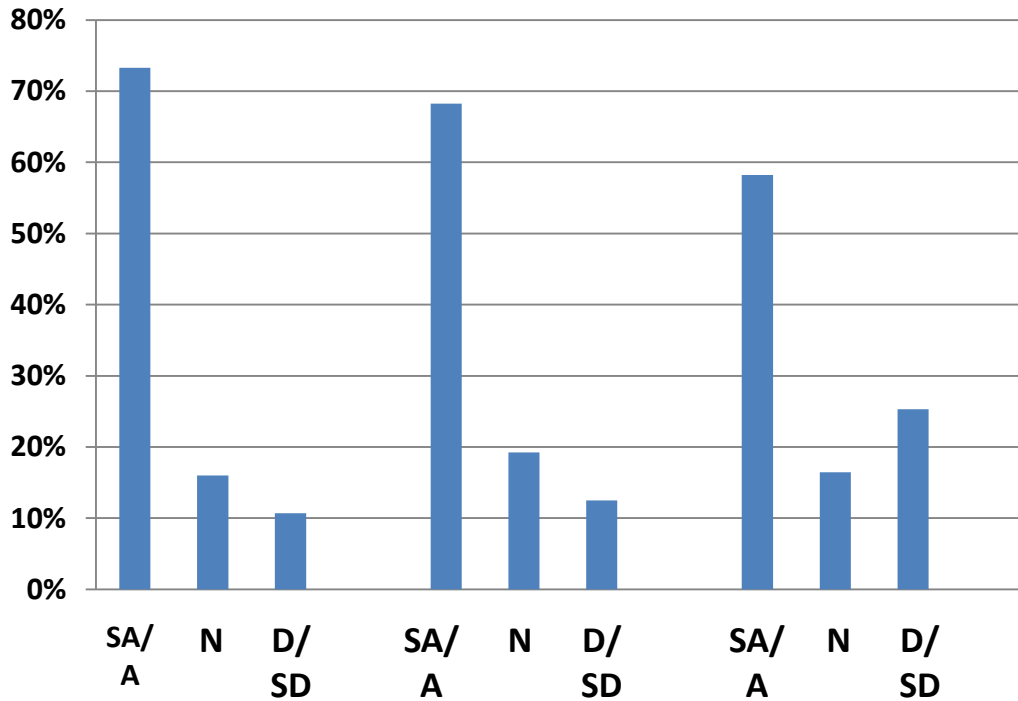
# Pro paper

- **UP**
  - I can highlight, make notes on them and basically personalize to suit me.
  - I have always found studying from printed papers to deliver the best results, thus I print all online sources and notes.
  - The screen is so tiring and less flexible. On the paper I can highlight and write my own summaries, and I am able to move at a faster pace.
  - […] I can go back and forth between pages quickly, and I can make notes.
  - I hate studying from the computer.
  - "LONG LIVE THE HARD-COPY!!!!!!!"
- **UNISA**
  - In print it is easier to highlight, mark pages, tick from pages, make notes and side-notes, add color, summarise and annotate.
  - It is less time consuming to locate information and easier to refer back and to find information in printed material.
  - It is difficult to see the structure while scrolling through the information.
  - One can access print even when there is no electricity or internet is down.
  - I cannot focus for long hours […] and it is tiring and strenuous for the eyes.
- **UniZulu**
  - It much easier when I read a printed format because electronic end up causing headache and eye problem.
  - I prefer reading on a printed format, for me it is easier.

# Pro e

- **UP**
  - Printed resources do not allow me to do a quick word search on the material, and that often frustrates me when I have to re-visit particular study concepts.
  - In terms of remembrance, what aids me most are the markups and comments I write while reading along. [...] flexibility of markup and so I am able to form a mental picture of important concepts [...]. I prefer electronic due to ease of access, integration in assignments and reference management software.
- **UNISA**
  - One remembers and concentrates better when reading electronically.
- **UniZulu**
  - [...] because it saves time and effort, as long as I have access to the internet I am then able to do my work accordingly. Instead of carrying books and printed article, I simple carry my external drive.
  - [...] because I can easily access it any time and I can share it.
  - For someone who lives in this day and age, the electronic format is more ideal in most situations.

# Either

- **UP**
  - It does not matter which format the information is in, as long as I understand and take notes I am bound to remember the information.
  - I personally like reading from both.
  - I remember equally well from printed and e-resources.
  - Although I remember best from printed sources, I don't mind reading electronic copies.
  - I like reading so where I read the information from really does not make a difference.
- **UNISA**
  - It makes no difference and I read print or electronically with the same ease.
  - I can relate to both formats.
- **UniZulu**
  - I prefer reading both in electronic and print format because the information is still the same no matter the format.

# Summary

- Pro paper
  - Easy to remember, get mental picture etc.
  - Easier, for making notes, high-lighting etc.
  - E-reading is strenuous
  - Don't like computers
  - Unreliable internet and electricity access
- Pro e
  - Easy to remember, get mental picture etc.
  - Additional functionalities, e.g. making notes, high-lighting, search, integration etc.
  - "In this day and age…"
- Either
  - I like reading and the format doesn't matter
  - As long as I understand the material

# UP:
# It is more convenient to read my assigned readings electronically than to read them in print
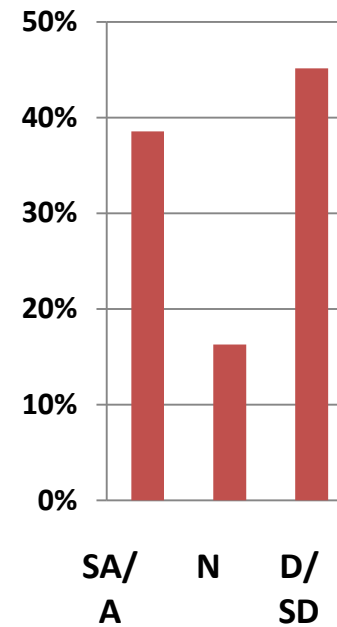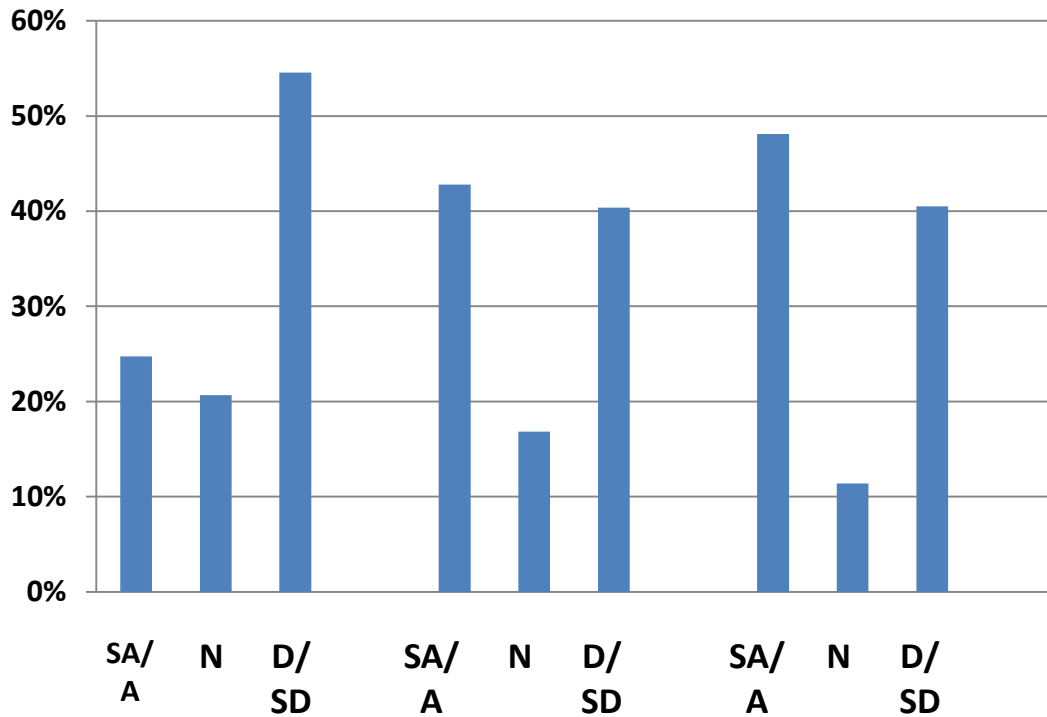


| SA/A | N | D/SD | SA/A | N | D/SD | SA/A | N | D/SD | | SA/A | N | D/SD |

| AIM (1st y) | IS - undergrad | IS - postgrad | | All |

# UP:
# I prefer to have all my course materials in print format (e.g. book, course reader, handouts)
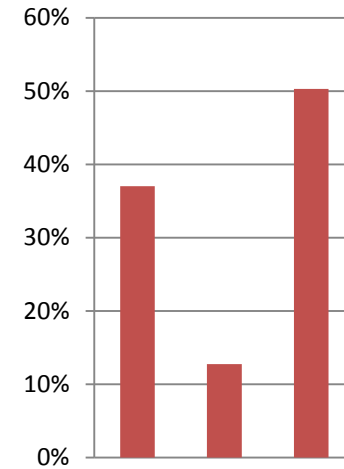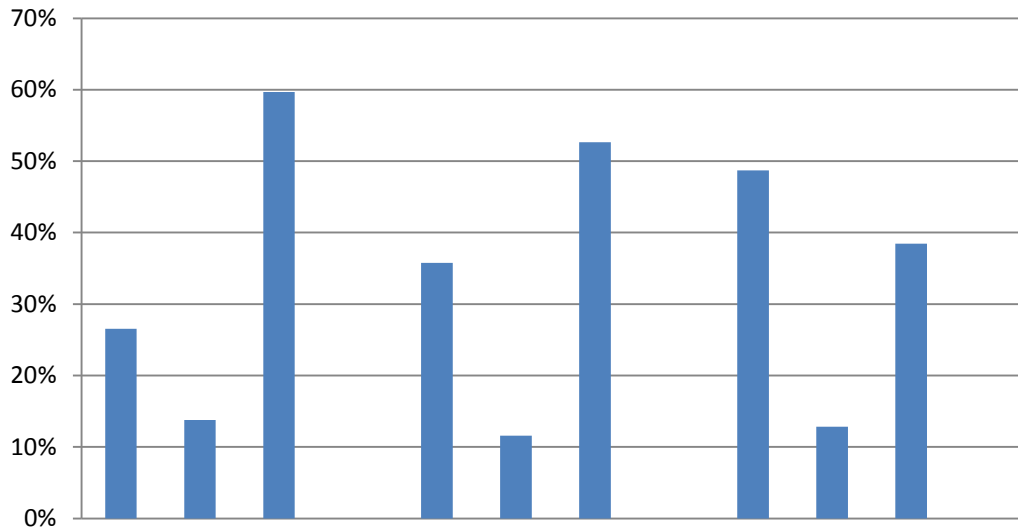
# I am more likely to review my course readings (after I've read them at least once) when they are in print
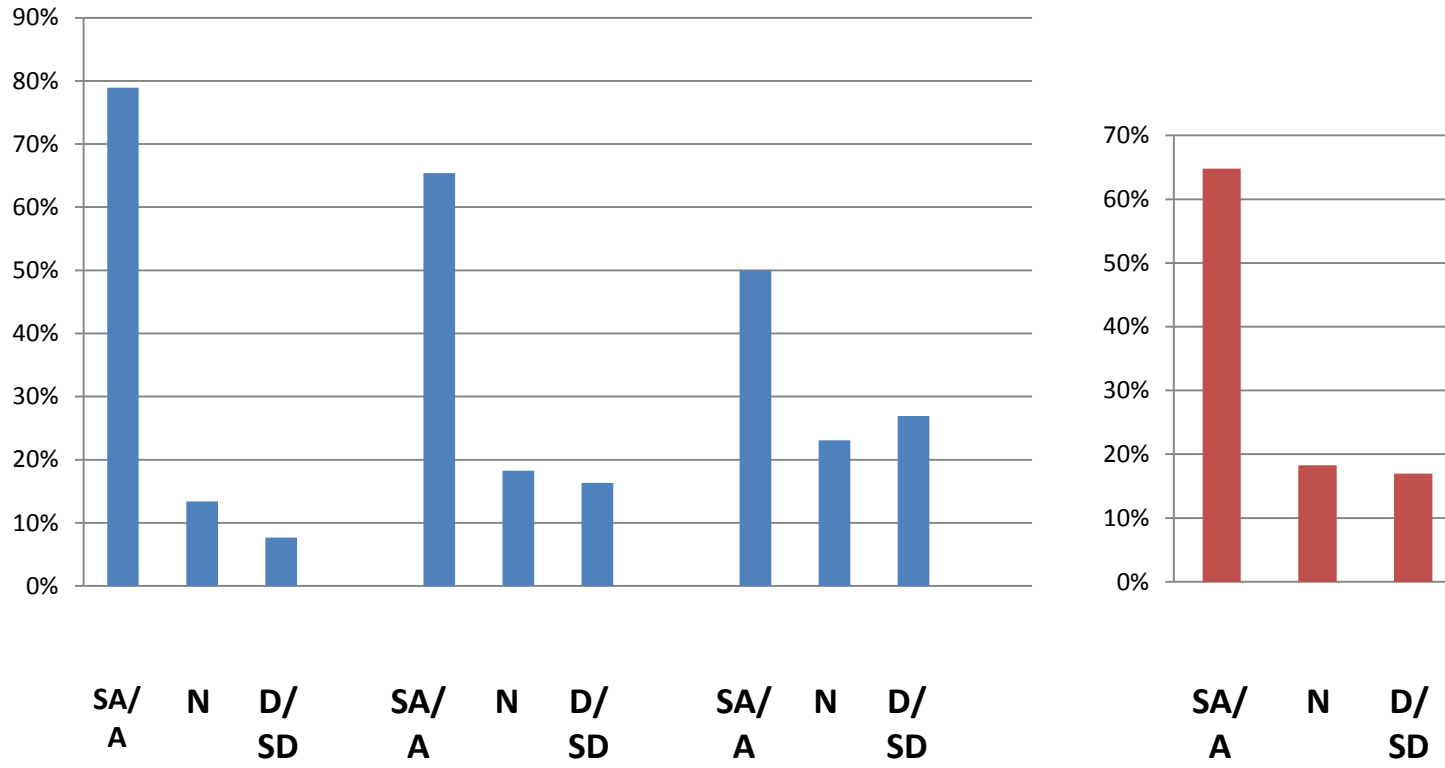


| SA/A | N | D/SD | | SA/A | N | D/SD | | SA/A | N | D/SD | | SA/A | N | D/SD |

| AIM (1st y) | IS - undergrad | IS - postgrad | | All |

# I usually highlight and notate my printed course readings
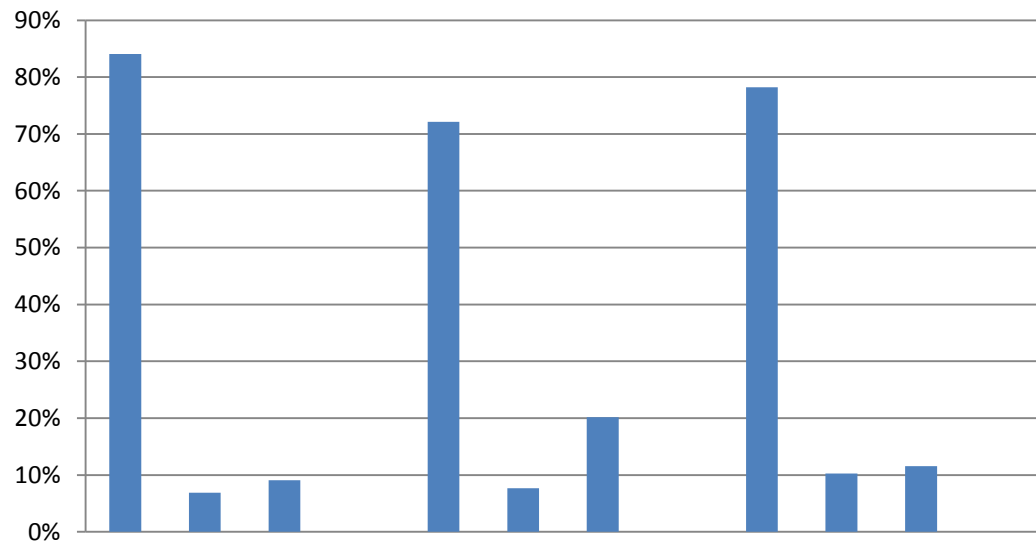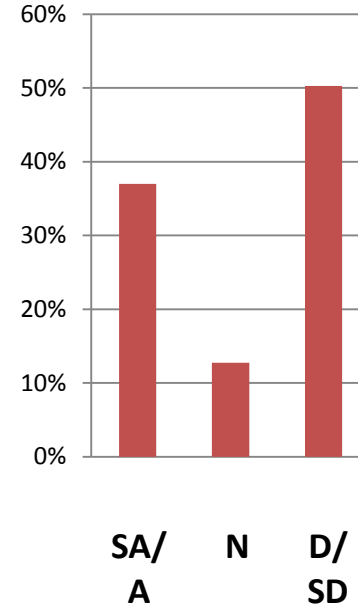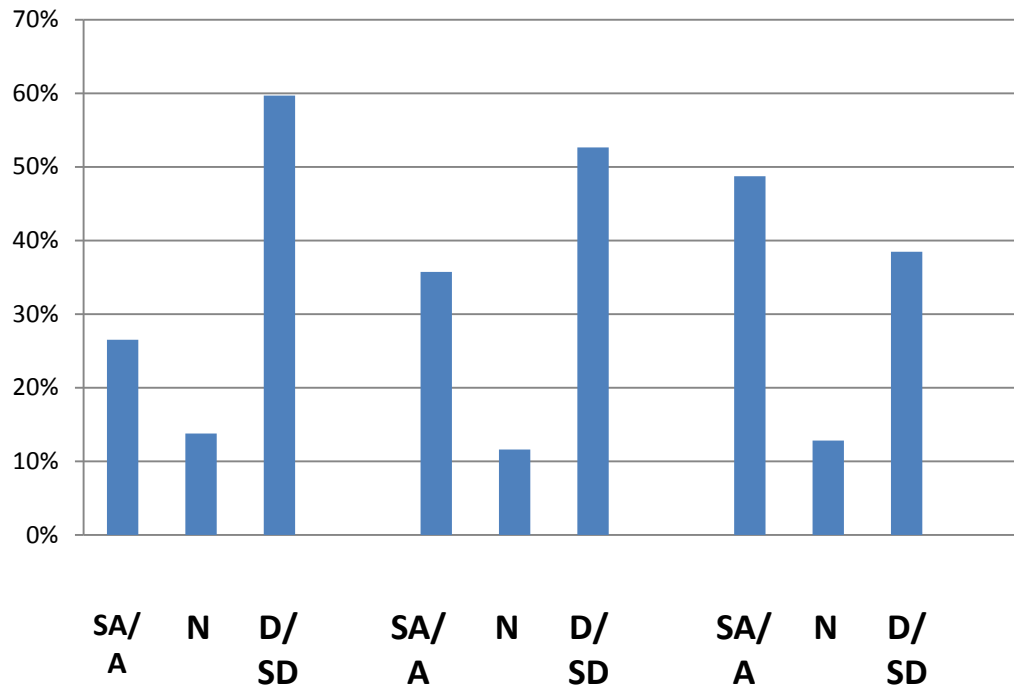
# Comments

- In general, strong preference for print
  - Correlates with most other country reports
  - UniZulu notable exception – number of respondents?
- Limited difference between junior and senior students
- Limited difference between residential and distance education students
- Preference for electronic format increases with seniority (postgraduates)

# Conclusion

- First report from South Africa (and Africa?)
- More detailed analyses are required
    - All questions
    - All enriched by qualitative comments
    - Comparisons of gender and age differences, as well as gender with age
    - Addition of more data from UniZulu
- Detailed comparison with other studies is required
- To be published in 2018

# Thank you!
## Questions / comments?

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