2020 Survey:

A New Era of Learning Brings Complex Challenges for Academic IT

Kivuto®

A Report by Kivuto
January 2020

Table of Contents

The Challenges of Managing and Distributing Academic Digital Resources

Technology is integral to education. Today's students are digital natives, training for careers that will almost all require some use of tech or software. To meet modern education standards, schools have to provide access to a wide variety of software, eTextbooks, cloud services, and other digital resources.

Kivuto wanted a better understanding of the challenges this involves for academic IT teams. How are digital licenses and entitlements being managed on campuses today? What are the frustrations involved, and what would it take to overcome them? How prepared are school IT teams to face the rising challenges related to security, compliance, and cloud licensing models?

To answer these questions, we partnered with University Business to conduct a survey of nearly 200 technology leaders from universities and colleges in the United States. Respondents were asked about the challenges and complexities of managing and distributing academic digital resources in a time of digital transformation.

We're pleased to present the results of this survey in the following report. Read on to learn about the state of digital resource management in the education industry today.

Warm regards,
Ryan Peatt

Ryan Peatt
Chief Product Officer
Kivuto Solutions

About Kivuto

Ryan Peatt, Kivuto's Chief Product Officer, has been in the education industry focusing on the management and distribution of digital resources for more than a decade. His keen understanding of the industry has established Ryan as a thought leader who sees a future for education in which digital resources and learning are at the route of the pedagogy.

Kivuto has been transforming the way schools distribute digital resources to students and faculty for over 20 years. Based out of Ottawa, ON, Kivuto has partnered with top vendors, publishers, and schools worldwide to streamline the management and delivery of academic software, eTextbooks, cloud licenses, and all other types of digital resource for educational institutions.
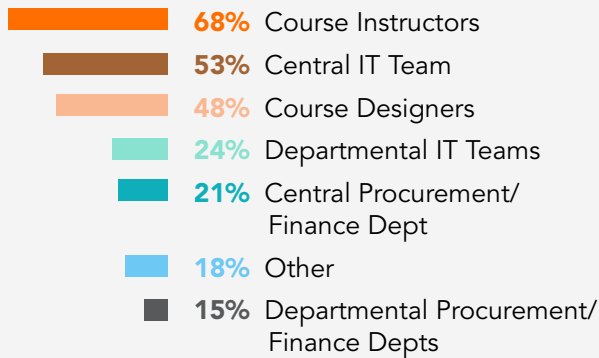
DEMOGRAPHICS

Kivuto and University Business surveyed nearly 200 stakeholders at educational institutions in the United States. Responses were received predominately from college or university staff and from schools of a wide range of sizes. Respondents' exact titles and positions varied, but they all held roles related to technology at their respective institutions.

Digital resources are handled in a variety of ways by respondents' institutions. While central IT and procurement teams are most commonly responsible for managing these resources, faculty and course designers are also influential stakeholders in the process.
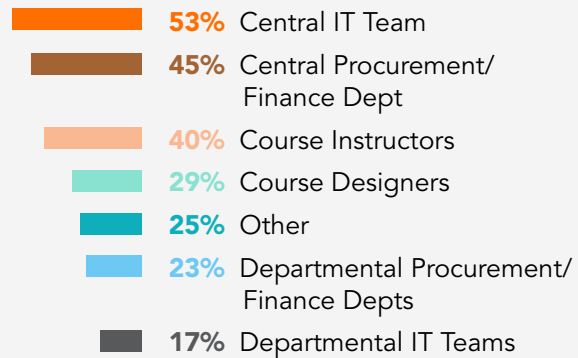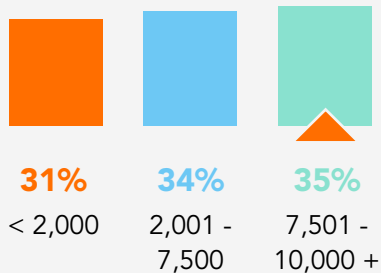
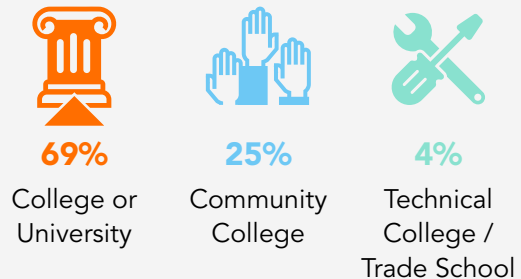## Who Manages Academic Digital Resources:

Responsible for Selection:

- **68%** Course Instructors
- **53%** Central IT Team
- **48%** Course Designers
- **24%** Departmental IT Teams
- **21%** Central Procurement/ Finance Dept
- **18%** Other
- **15%** Departmental Procurement/ Finance Depts

Responsible for Purchasing:

- **53%** Central IT Team
- **45%** Central Procurement/ Finance Dept
- **40%** Course Instructors
- **29%** Course Designers
- **25%** Other
- **23%** Departmental Procurement/ Finance Depts
- **17%** Departmental IT Teams

Student Enrollment:

- **31%** < 2,000
- **34%** 2,001 - 7,500
- **35%** 7,501 - 10,000 +

Institution Type:

- **69%** College or University
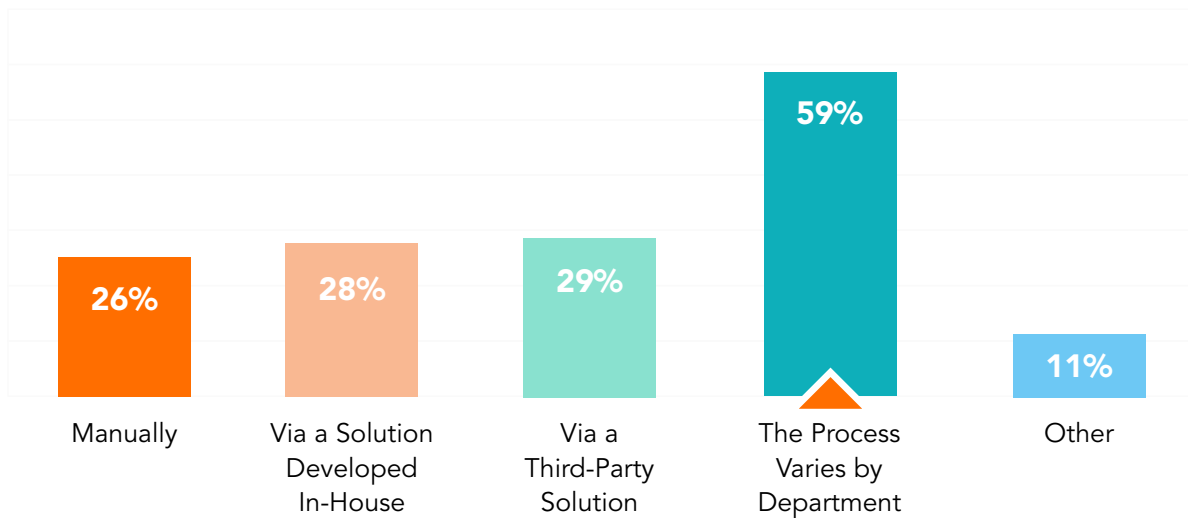- **25%** Community College
- **4%** Technical College / Trade School

How do you manage and distribute digital resources at your institution today?

59%

Say the Process Varies by Department

Manually — **26%**
Via a Solution Developed In-House — **28%**
Via a Third-Party Solution — **29%**
The Process Varies by Department — **59%**
Other — **11%**

Most survey respondents indicated that digital resources are managed and distributed differently from department to department. If not problematic today, this siloed approach is certain to cause problems in the future, as digital resources become more core to the pedagogy. At a time when academic institutions are struggling to keep up with the demands of the digital-transformation era, managing these resources departmentally could create challenges related to student success, budget, and compliance.

Do you find the management and distribution of digital resources challenging?

63% Yes

37% No
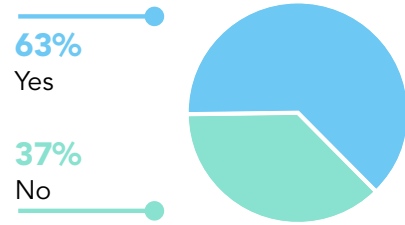
What do you find most challenging about managing and distributing digital resources?

86%
Say **Lack of Integration Between Systems and Workflows**

55%	86%	12%	48%	57%	18%
Time Management	Lack of Integration Between Systems and Workflows	Shelfware	Compliance Issues	Security Issues	Other
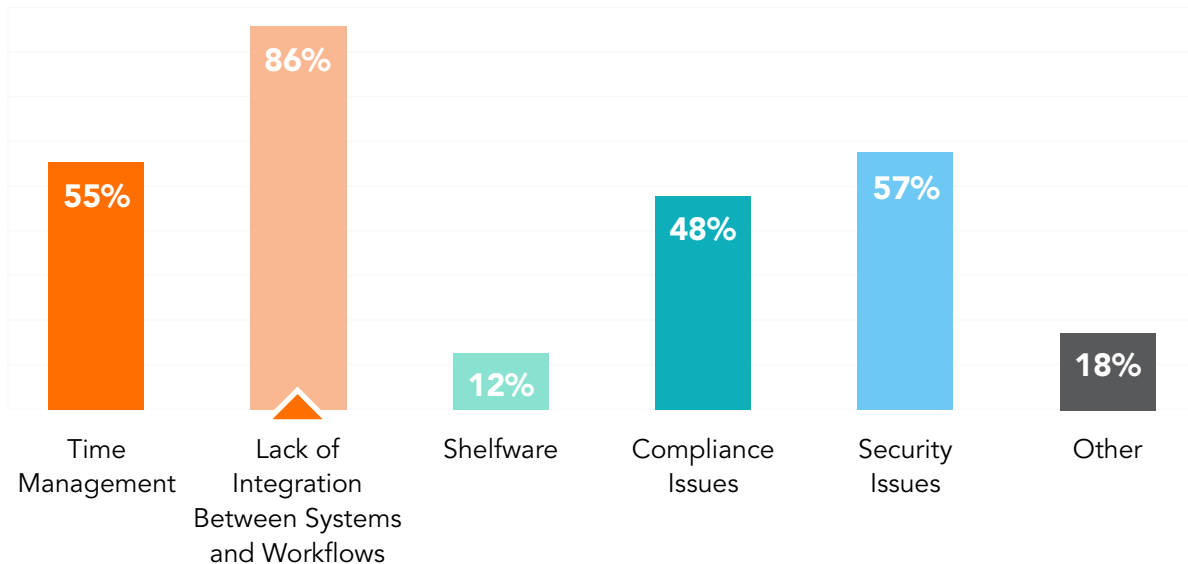
A significant majority of respondents reported that they find it difficult to manage and distribute digital resources at their school. They identified an array of challenges that contribute to this difficulty, including security and compliance concerns and how time-consuming the process is. However, the most common challenge identified by far was a lack of integration between systems and workflows. This is another example of how siloed procedures are causing headaches at educational institutions, as needing to master and manage a patchwork of decentralized processes is a heavy burden on tech leaders.
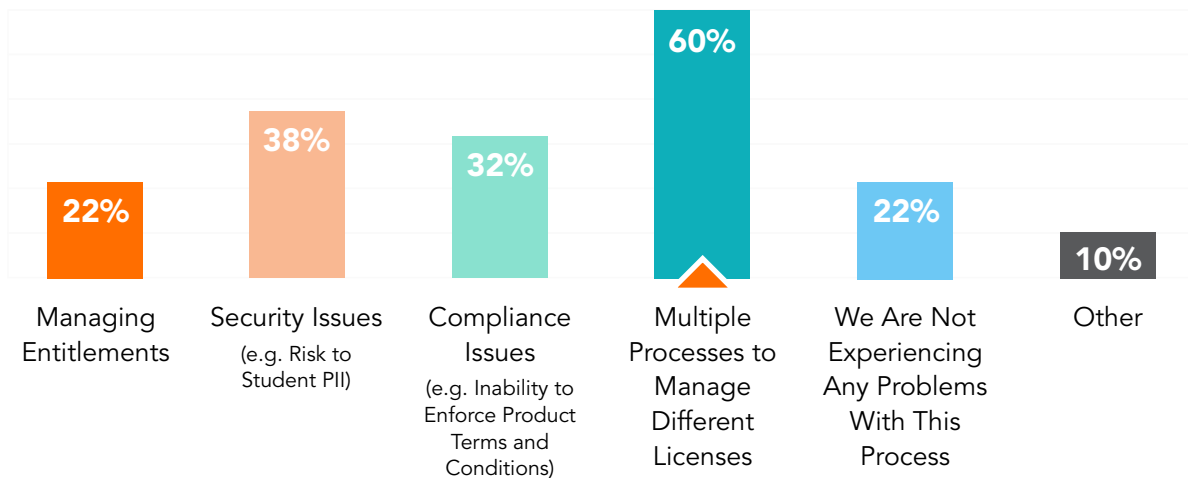
How many digital resources requiring a cloud-based administrative tool are you managing in your institution today?

14% One

23% Two

62% Three +
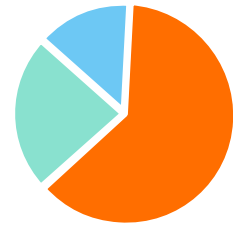
## What challenges do you experience with the management of cloud resources?

60%

Say **Multiple Processes to Manage Different Licenses**

22%	38%	32%	60%	22%	10%
Managing Entitlements	Security Issues (e.g. Risk to Student PII)	Compliance Issues (e.g. Inability to Enforce Product Terms and Conditions)	Multiple Processes to Manage Different Licenses	We Are Not Experiencing Any Problems With This Process	Other

The ongoing transition to the cloud is fundamentally changing the nature of managing digital resources, in education and beyond. The responses shown hint at what new challenges this change is creating for academic institutions. The most commonly reported challenge related to the management of cloud resources is the existence of different systems and processes to manage each product – yet another way in which schools are suffering from silos and a lack of integration. Unfortunately, this challenge is only likely to grow as more vendors move their products to the cloud, especially if schools continue to have to manage each cloud product in a unique way.

How concerned are you about compliance with applicable regulations (e.g. privacy laws like the GDPR/FERPA and accessibility laws like the ADA) when it comes to how your institution distributes digital resources?

84%

Say **Somewhat to Very Concerned**

52%
Somewhat
Concerned

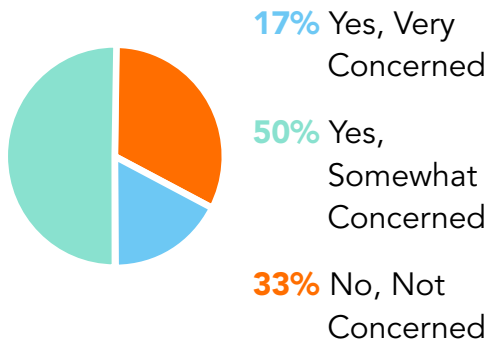**32%**
Very
Concerned

16%
Not
Concerned
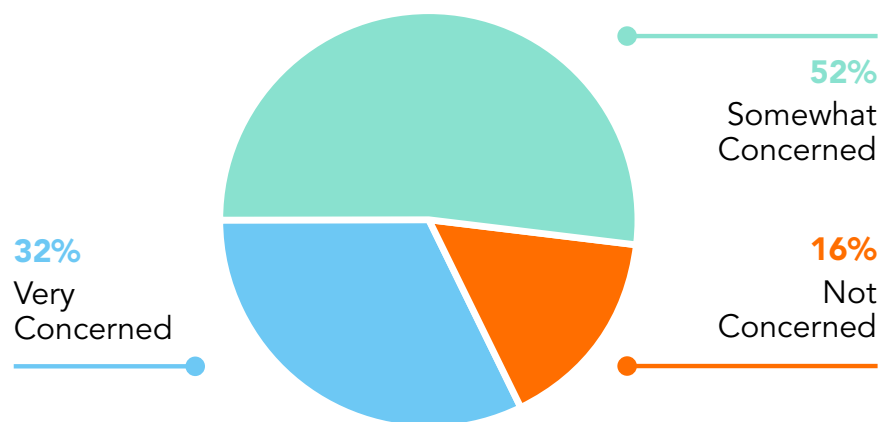
There's no denying that compliance is an important concern when distributing digital resources. The terms and conditions attached to specific products are only part of the equation. New, more robust privacy laws are being introduced around the world, and schools need to adapt to managing their resources in compliance with them. And though US schools may not be very concerned about the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for example, a new privacy law passed in California this year will establish similar rules, and more legislation of this kind is sure to follow. For these reasons, it's concerning that 68% of respondents reported feeling either unconcerned or only somewhat concerned about challenges related to complying with such laws. This is an issue schools may want to regard more seriously going forward.

How much visibility do you have into the rate at which the digital resources procured by your institution are being adopted and used by students, faculty, and staff?

77% *Say* **Limited to No Visibility**

22% Full Visibility

61% Limited Visibility
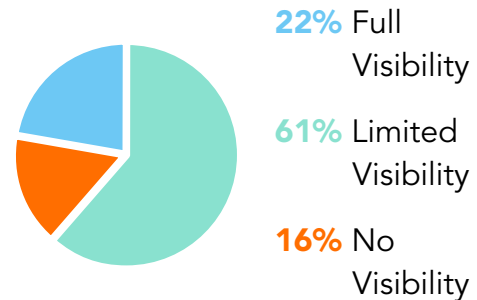
16% No Visibility

67% *Say* **Yes, Very to Somewhat Concerned**

17% Yes, Very Concerned

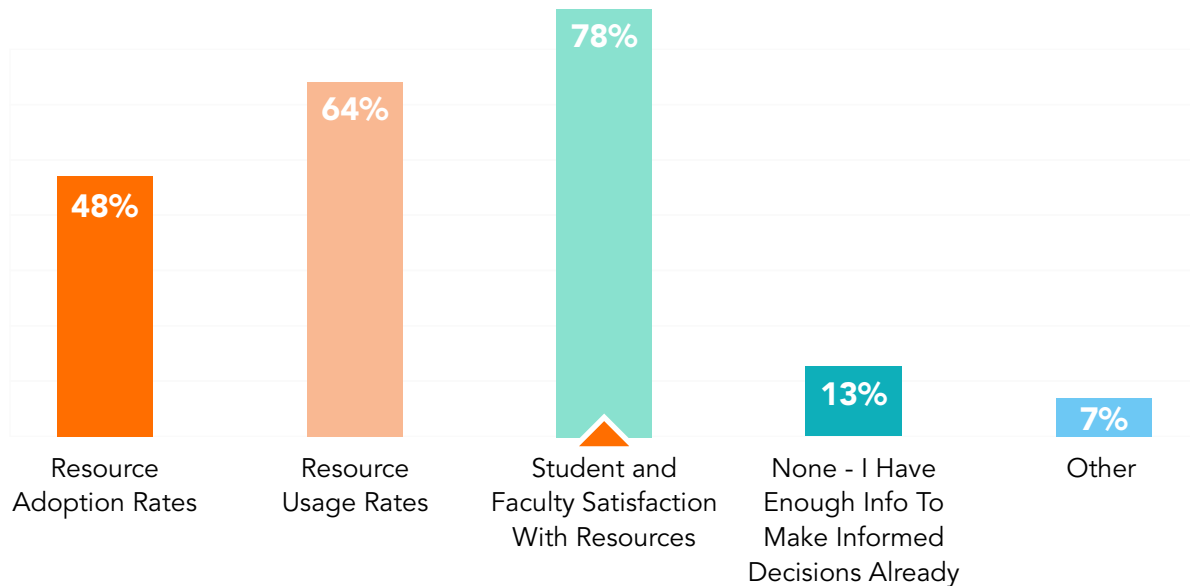**50%** Yes, Somewhat Concerned

33% No, Not Concerned

Are you concerned by a lack of visibility into the rate at which the digital resources at your institution are being adopted and used by students, faculty, and staff?

Fewer than a quarter of respondents reported having full visibility into the rate at which digital products are being adopted and used at their respective schools. This is unfortunate, as these kinds of insights are key to student success and optimizing resource costs. Institutions need visibility into product adoption and usage in order to be sure they're ordering the right number of licenses, that faculty are using them as part of the pedagogy, and that students are accessing and learning with these resources.

What data insights related to digital resources do you wish that you had in order to make more informed purchasing decisions?

78%

Say **Student and Faculty Satisfaction With Resources**

48%	64%	78%	13%	7%
Resource Adoption Rates	Resource Usage Rates	Student and Faculty Satisfaction With Resources	None - I Have Enough Info To Make Informed Decisions Already	Other

Although visibility into adoption and usage rates is important, the majority of respondents indicated that insights into end-user satisfaction would be most useful to them. This makes sense, as institutions don't just need to ensure that they buy the right quantity of product – they need to be sure they're procuring the right products in the first place. Being able to gage student and faculty satisfaction with digital products could go a long way toward helping schools better assess demand and pick the best products to use.

Does your institution recover any of the costs of digital resources? If so, how?
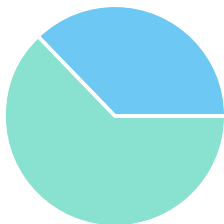
60% *Say* No, We Don't Recover These Costs
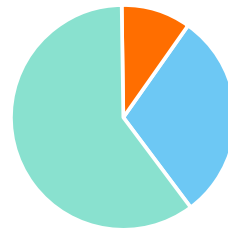
30% Yes, We Recover Costs by Charging Students and Faculty for Access to Digital Resources

60% No, We Don't Recover These Costs

10% Other

66% *Say* No

34% Yes

66% No

Is your institution interested in starting to recover these costs?

Cost recovery isn't something that all schools consider necessary. To those that do, it can mean a number of things. Some institutions try to recover 100% of their investment in certain products, or even turn a small profit. Other schools only want to allay licensing costs by recouping a small portion of them. Costs can be recovered by charging students and faculty for access to resources in a point-of-sale manner or through other means, such as being built into student fees. Simply put, cost recovery is merely a means of improving ROI and providing more flexibility to schools that need it.

▶ Managing Academic Digital Resources is Not Easy

Schools clearly face difficulties in the management and distribution of digital resources. A significant majority of survey respondents (63%) indicated that they find this process challenging. The most commonly cited challenge by far was a lack of integration between systems and workflows (86%), followed by security issues (57%) and time-management issues (55%).

▶ Processes Vary

Different schools – even different departments – manage and distribute digital resources in very different ways. Institutions are about evenly split between handling these processes manually (26%), via a third-party solution (29%), and via a solution developed in-house (28%). No method of managing and distributing resources has been universally accepted as best practice across the education industry yet.

▶ Roles Vary

Similar to the above, there's no universal rule regarding who should be responsible for selecting and procuring digital resources at academic institutions. Faculty maintain a great deal of control over what resources are used in their courses, but so do course designers and IT staff. While central IT and procurement teams are most often responsible for managing these resources, 25% of respondents answered this question with "Other" and identified alternatives ranging from library and bookstore staff to specialized technology committees.

▶ Decentralization Brings Challenges

The process of procuring, managing, and distributing digital resources varies by department at many schools. Unintegrated systems and the need to manage cloud resources through separate platforms contribute to the chaos of managing these resources. Centralizing the management of these resources as much as possible could help schools streamline their administrative processes, as well as increasing visibility into adoption and usage rates.

> **"**
>
> Shadow IT, decentralized licensing and distribution models, in-house systems, and manual workarounds have compounded the challenges that IT faces when managing digital resources. Quite simply, they don't know what they don't know. It is not uncommon for an academic institution to have varying models for purchasing and distribution, nor is it uncommon for these processes to live on different campuses or even within different departments, making it impossible to have visibility across all channels in one central place.
>
> **Ryan Peatt,**
> *CPO at Kivuto Solutions*

The Importance of Compliance is Underestimated

Though privacy laws are on the rise, there seems to be a certain complacency at schools regarding the importance of compliance. Almost 70% of respondents reported feeling either unconcerned or only somewhat concerned about complying with privacy and accessibility regulations.

Cost Recovery Isn't for Everyone

Schools are split on the value of recovering the costs they invest into digital resources, but most don't consider it a priority. A majority of schools (60%) don't bother recovering these costs, and a majority of those schools (66%) don't currently have any interest in starting to do so.

Schools Need to Brace for the Cloud

The transition to the cloud is already changing how digital resources are managed and accessed. It's concerning that only 17% of respondents believe that their schools are fully prepared to deal with the challenges these changes will bring as more vendors move their products to the cloud.

> "
>
> "When procedures and resources are decentralized, IT service organizations can't ensure compliance. They can't provide support, they lack governance, and they can't ensure value to their institutions."
>
> **Ryan Peatt,**
> *CPO at Kivuto Solutions*

CONCLUSION

These survey findings provide interesting insights into the challenge of managing academic digital resources in higher education. Procedures vary by department, and even by product. Unintegrated systems and limited visibility into product adoption and end-user satisfaction rates add to the burden of management – a burden that's likely to grow as more software moves to the cloud.

But there are options for institutions looking to streamline digital-resource management. Though many still rely on home-grown distribution solutions, which can be labor-intensive to maintain, 29% of respondents have found a third-party solution to take at least some of the work out of managing and distributing digital resources.

Kivuto is proud to offer such a solution in the form of our Kivuto Cloud platform. Visit **https://kivuto.com/cloud** to find out how Kivuto Cloud can simplify the management and distribution of digital resources at your school.

METHODOLOGY

This survey was developed in partnership between Kivuto and University Business (UB). It was deployed via email invitation from November 20-25, 2019 to the UB audience of higher education technology leaders at two- and four-year colleges and universities around the U.S. A total of 197 respondents voluntarily participated.