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# COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

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## Palatine Library Community Survey: Residents Say Library is “Essential”

In September of 2016, Palatine Public Library District conducted a community survey to get a sense of what both users and non-users think about their Library. The number of responses was far beyond what anyone imagined: over 6500 people responded, nearly 8% of the total population of the Library’s service area. And for 99% of the respondents, the Library is “essential to the community.”

The sheer number of responses were in and of themselves a major surprise. (A similar survey in 2012 netted less than 300 responses.) The eagerness and willingness of people to participate indicated a strong and vibrant interest in Palatine Library. Thousands of people took the time to answer open-ended questions providing comments on subjects related to collections, customer service, facilities, hours, policies, programming, and technology.

The survey was launched at Palatine’s Street Fest, a community festival with music and entertainment for all ages. People at the fest were glad to visit the Library’s table and fill out the survey, available in either print or digital format. Small freebies were given out and people were engaged with Library staff.

Throughout the month of September, the survey was available in the Library in both English and Spanish and sent out in emails to users and non-users asking for their input. As an incentive, respondents could enter their contact information for a chance to win an iPad as the grand prize. (See Appendix 1 - Survey Sample)

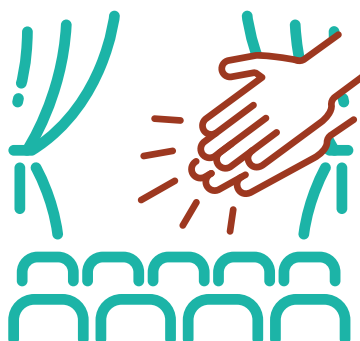


Palatine Streetfest, September 2016

A variety of questions provided staff with a range of insights into how Palatine Library is used, overall satisfaction, and what patrons want and need, now and in the future.



- Over 75% use the Library at least monthly, and nearly 50% use it once each week
- People of all ages use the Library, with nearly 60% between the ages of 30-64



- Over 50% rate events and classes for adults as good or excellent, while 40% did not attend classes or weren't sure;
- 41% similarly rate positive for children's programs, with 54% not applicable;
- and 25% report good or excellent for teen programs, with 70% answering don't know/not applicable



- The Library received positive marks as easy to use; from getting help from staff to finding materials they wanted



- Users interests extend beyond reading (85%), these include: going to the movies (41%), sports/fitness activities (52%), watching television (67%), browsing the Internet (71%)



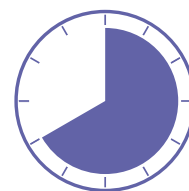
- Not all users are aware of all Library services, such as free streaming movies and music, use of computers and video cameras, digital media, and many other devices, services, programs, and events



- The vast majority find the Library to be a "friendly and welcoming" place, and almost all rate the collections of books, movies, music, and magazines as good to excellent



- A small amount responded that parking was problematic and that some of the digital collection was not easy to use



- Over 80% are satisfied with the hours of operation while the remainder would like longer hours, especially on the weekends

(See Appendix 2 - Survey Data Charts)

# VALUE

*In responding to what users valued most about the library, customer service that is both professional and personal presented the highest ratings, with the breadth and depth of the collections as coming in at a close second.* The cleanliness and comfort of the library buildings, and everything they offer, as well as the accessibility afforded by generous hours of operation all drew praise. Out of a total of 4366 written responses, here are a few first-hand comments on what people value the most:

- *That it is like a second home to me.*
- *Aprecio que han comprado todos los libros que he necesitado, GRACIAS. (I appreciate that you have bought all the books that I needed, THANK YOU.)*
- *The variety of resources available. The library's resources were so valuable, especially when my children were very small and as they grew and needed different resources, the library offered that for them as well. We all still use the library services, even though they are high school seniors.*
- *Everything!*
- *The free Wi-Fi that the library provides so I can work on college stuff, homework, scholarships and research.*
- *It is a high-tech, wonderful library offering a variety of interesting and useful programs for all ages. The staff are friendly and eager to be of help to all the patrons. I would have to say what I value MOST is the awesome, dedicated employees of the library who will always give more than 100% to assist the residents of our community.*

***The fact that it has resources  
that a family like mine can't  
afford to have at home!  
Thank you!***



*Families working on school project*

Visitors highly value the knowledgeable and welcoming staff, often calling out specific staff members by name. They appreciate being able to request certain titles and ask staff a variety of questions. Words often repeated in written responses related to customer service were: ***friendly, helpful, community, excellent, convenient, and accessible.***

A majority of comments were related to the Library's collection and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the diverse number of subjects, genres, formats, and selection one can find. Putting items on hold and picking them up was often cited as a much-appreciated service as well.

- *There are always new movies and lots of foreign films.*
- *It's wonderful collections of books, movies, music, magazines, etc.*
- *I mainly use the digital collections. I prefer to not have to drive to/from the library to get books and pay late fees if I forget to bring items back on time.*
- *Network of Libraries, that I can reserve material online, and it will arrive in Palatine and send me an email when ready.*

Many reported how much they appreciated the clean and appealing building, the fun spaces for their children to play and interact, the areas for study and quiet reflection, and just having a place close to home to gather and connect.



Programs and events at the Library are a large part of creating a welcoming environment. Staff arranges and presents **educational, instructive, and entertaining programming** for visitors of all ages and interests. Hundreds of patrons commented about how much they enjoy the programs and appreciate the diverse selection for their families.



Superhero Fanfest

Some top comments shared:

- *The events and programs for kids/families. I love the fact that there is a consistent story time offered each week!*
- *The variety of events & classes you offer is phenomenal! Absolutely THE BEST!*
- *At this time in my life, I really value the computer classes I have been taking at the library to help my career skills.*

Having access to services online and providing patrons with current technology were also among positive comments from patrons. When users need a computer, printer, or free Wi-Fi, they can rely upon the Library to provide those resources.



Computer Lab

## COMMUNITY WANTS MORE

**Still, people made it clear they would be happy with MORE resources—books, DVDs, digital materials, magazines, more of everything,** especially the things they like and use the most. And they would like the Library to be open more if possible, especially on Fridays and Sundays. They would like more space, programs, and many even wish they just had more time to spend at the Library.

Visitors of Palatine Library often spend time at other local libraries. Some of these types of users expressed concerns about differing or larger collections at neighboring libraries, or policies that provided dissimilar levels of service. Palatine Library is one of many libraries in the northern suburbs that provide great services to the community. When compared to some of its neighbors, Palatine Library delivers outstanding service despite the fact that revenue is considerably less. It serves 17% more people than Arlington Heights Memorial Library with two-thirds of their budget, and the per capita costs are half that of Barrington and Rolling Meadows, and less than 40% of Lake Zurich. (See Appendix 3 – Comparative Funding Chart)



With approximately 90,000 residents, predominately within the communities of Palatine and Hoffman Estates, sustaining even the current level of service and collections is a challenge without additional revenue. The Library boasts close to 1.5 million in circulation and approximately 530,000 visitors per year. Over 1200 programs per year are provided for educational and entertainment interests. Based upon customer's requests, Palatine Library must find ways to meet the growing needs of the community and continue to communicate the immense value the Library provides for less.



A separate set of questions were designed for the non-user group; those that reported they use the Library seldom or never. About 400 responses were received from this group. When asked, ***“I would use the Library if...,” some shared they wished they had more time to visit or were closer to the Library.*** They also reported some negative impressions based on borrowing policies, miscommunications, or obstacles related to digital access such as:

- *there were better ebook selections and better availability.*
- *I was allowed to check out DVDs, including Blu-ray and recent releases with my Barrington library card.*
- *they forgave fines.*

## CURRENT IMPROVEMENTS

From the onset of this project, Library staff were looking forward to hearing from patrons about the services they felt were important to them and how to make improvements. Staff continue to listen and evaluate users concerns and experiences. This list of recent accomplishments based on feedback from the survey shows staff’s commitment to continuous improvements.

- Greater partnerships with schools to bring more resources to students and teachers
- Improved the collection by adding titles and materials based on specific requests



LEGO WeDo Kits brought to Winston Campus

- Relaxed certain borrowing policies for patron and non-resident borrowers for greater access to materials
- Enhanced notifications to patrons regarding their account status
- Revised policy on Business Cards for local businesses and non-profits to increase access
- Updated the Library app and extended Wi-Fi coverage
- Added more digital equipment for check-out (Roku’s and GoPro Cameras)
- Increased children’s classes, storytimes, and STEM resources (Ozobots and STEM Kits) and enriched the children’s play area
- Made improvements to the lighting in the underground parking garage



Staff led Ozobot program

## WEBSITE

At about the same time as the launch of the survey, Library staff started planning for a new and updated website. The survey allowed for a second opportunity to connect with the community and get their help. Staff contacted some survey participants that were willing to assist, and set up a test group to conduct user experience research for the new website, launching in January 2018. Information gathered from these activities was integral to the planning and creation of the brand-new website which includes more helpful menus, an improved event calendar, and responsive design.



# LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

The staff and Board of Palatine Public Library District sincerely care about the community and value their input. In order to address the growing needs of its users, staff and Board must continue with careful planning and goal setting which should include the following elements:

- The survey indicates that users most value the great collection and variety of materials. To remain relevant to the community, staff need to continue to study emerging trends and refresh the collection based on user's needs and popular themes.
- Users also value the excellent customer service at the Library. Staff must be supported and encouraged to daily demonstrate that we are here to serve.
- Assessing essential community needs and how the Library can best meet those needs, requires the Library to work closely with community leaders to forecast for the future.
- Programming and services need to be regularly evaluated so that staff can understand and measure the impact on attendees.
- Budget constraints may require staff to prioritize services and optimize procedures that support ongoing initiatives.
- Study the Library open hours to assess whether changes can be made to increase accessibility and convenience for the community.

Palatine Public Library District staff and Board create both short and five-year-long Strategic Plans with goals to consider budget impact and ensure essential services continue now and in the future. Areas covered in these plans include: financial budget, building maintenance, human resources, technology, communications, programs and services, collection development, and community connections. The information gathered from the survey is influential to these plans.



*ESL Conversation Group*



*Children playing with fun-to-learn kiosk*



*Teen Advisory Board volunteers*