

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Worthington Libraries
in the community
and in people's lives



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STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD: Worthington Libraries in the community and in people's lives

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Table of contents

Introduction	1
Research design	5
Research questions	5
Data collection	5
Data analysis.....	12
Limitations of the study	15
Findings	17
Library activities.....	17
Library services	42
The library in the community	52
The library in people’s lives.....	67
Discussion	75
A crowded field	75
Stand-out services.....	77
Conclusion	79
Library amplified	79
Friction free	79
Alone together.....	79
Human scale	80
References	81
Appendices	87

List of Tables

Table 1.	Frequency of survey responses by source.....	6
Table 2.	Frequency of survey responses by age.....	7
Table 3.	Frequency of survey responses by gender identity.....	8
Table 4.	Frequency of survey responses by preferred library	8
Table 5.	Frequency of survey responses by ZIP code.....	9
Table 6.	Frequency of survey responses by IP address.....	9
Table 7.	Selection of interview participants by demographic categories	10
Table 8.	Preferred libraries of selected interview participants	10
Table 9.	Library core service areas and activities undertaken in the last year	17
Table 10.	Library borrowing activities, 2008-2018.....	18
Table 11.	Library borrowing statistics, 2000-2019.....	19
Table 12.	Library account activities, 2008-2018	21
Table 13.	Library account usage statistics, 2000-2019.....	22
Table 14.	Library facility activities, 2018	22
Table 15.	Library facility usage statistics, 2000-2018	23
Table 16.	Library research and recommendation activities, 2008-2018.....	25
Table 17.	Library research activities, by survey response location.....	26
Table 18.	Library in-person reference activities, by survey response location.....	26
Table 19.	Library research and recommendation usage statistics, 2000-2019	26
Table 20.	Library program and event activities, 2008-2018	29
Table 21.	Library program and event usage statistics, 2000-2019.....	30
Table 22.	Library technology activities, 2008-2018	33
Table 23.	Library technology usage statistics, 2000-2019.....	33
Table 24.	Library digital and online activities, 2008-2018	34
Table 25.	Library digital and online usage statistics, 2000-2019	35
Table 26.	Library children’s services activities, 2016-2018.....	36
Table 27.	Library children’s services activities, by age	37
Table 28.	Library children’s program attendance statistics, 2000-2019.....	37
Table 29.	Library office services activities, 2016-2018.....	39
Table 30.	Library office services usage statistics, 2000-2019.....	40
Table 31.	Library background information activities, 2008-2018.....	41
Table 32.	Library information usage statistics, 2000-2019.....	41
Table 33.	Awareness of library materials and services.....	43
Table 34.	Mentions of library materials and services	45
Table 35.	Interest in library materials and services.....	47
Table 36.	Use of library materials and services.....	50
Table 37.	Comparison of activities at the library and elsewhere.....	53
Table 38.	Comparison of borrowing activities at the library and elsewhere.....	54
Table 39.	Comparison of technology activities at the library and elsewhere	56
Table 40.	Comparison of account activities at the library and elsewhere	57
Table 41.	Comparison of facility activities at the library and elsewhere.....	57
Table 42.	Comparison of facility activities at the library and elsewhere, by age.....	58
Table 43.	Comparison of office services activities at the library and elsewhere	59
Table 44.	Comparison of research and recommendation activities at the library and elsewhere.....	60
Table 45.	Comparison of background information activities at the library and elsewhere.....	62
Table 46.	Comparison of children’s services activities at the library and elsewhere.....	63
Table 47.	Comparison of program and event activities at the library and elsewhere	65
Table 48.	Comparison of digital and online activities at the library and elsewhere.....	66

INTRODUCTION

Worthington, Ohio is booming. From the period 2010-2018, the number of households in the Worthington City School District increased by 14% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b). Worthington is the 14th largest school district in Ohio (Bowers, 2020) and has been one of the fastest growing in the state, with continued growth projected for several more years (Gilchrist, 2018). Many agencies, organizations and businesses are actively engaging our expanding population, from the Worthington Parks and Recreation Department and McConnell Arts Center to Old Worthington Partnership and COHatch, not to mention us at Worthington Libraries.

In addition to growth, Worthington has seen dramatic changes in demographic trends, technology access, economic conditions and political climate. Our community is more diverse and its people are simultaneously more connected and more divided than ever before. Worthington Schools report that 6% of students were born outside the U.S., originating from 90 countries and speaking 59 unique languages (Bowers, 2020). As of 2018, virtually all households (98%) in the Worthington school district have at least one computing device, including a computer or laptop (92%) or a smartphone (94%), as well as a broadband internet subscription (95%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018d). From 2010-2018, the number of households earning more than \$100,000 increased from 33% to 42% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b), while in 2019, the Worthington Resource Pantry reported that they served 13% more households than in the previous year (Worthington Resource Pantry, 2020). In 2016 and 2018, residents have elected national- and state-level officials from both political parties equally, including U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D) and Rob Portman (R), U.S. Representatives Troy Balderson (R) and Joyce Beatty (D), Ohio Senators Andrew Brenner (R) and Stephanie Kunze (R) and Ohio Representatives David Leland (D) and Beth Liston (D).

Within this shifting landscape, as many in the popular media would tell it, libraries are at risk of becoming obsolete and we must transform ourselves if we are to survive. Headlines ranging from hand-wringing to hostile include: "The End of the Library" (Siegler, 2013), "What Will Become of the Library?" (Agresta, 2014), "When Google is your librarian and Starbucks your WiFi, do we still need public libraries?" (Lozada, 2015), "Don't mourn the loss of libraries—the internet has made them obsolete" (McTernan, 2016) and, perhaps most (in)famously from *Forbes*, "Amazon Should Replace Local Libraries to Save Taxpayers Money" (Mourdoukoutas, 2018).

The library community acts swiftly and in solidarity to counter such claims. In fact, after outcry from library boosters, *Forbes* retracted its 2018 article just two days after it was published. A sampling of headlines includes: "Behold This Disastrously Bad Op-Ed Calling for Amazon to Replace Libraries" (McKay, 2018), "Forbes suggested Amazon should replace libraries, and people aren't having it" (Grothaus, 2018) and "'Twaddle': librarians respond to suggestion Amazon should replace libraries" (Lyons, 2018).

And yet, at the same time, public libraries frequently proclaim that we are “more than *just* books,” falling over ourselves to draw attention to the variety of novel materials and innovative services we offer. For instance, Berkeley Public Library offers weed eaters and hedge trimmers to borrow, O’Fallon Public Library in Illinois offers fishing poles and New York Public Library offers neckties and handbags (Daily, 2018). At Worthington Libraries, we, too, provide a slew of non-traditional items to borrow, from car jump starters to light therapy lamps. We also offer new technology like voice assistants to keep up-to-date with programs and have trained staff offering a variety of convenience services, such as passport application processing and notarization.

Against this dynamic backdrop, you might assume that library usage, particularly book borrowing, is dropping and, as a result, libraries are desperately clamoring to re-establish our relevance in the community. On the contrary, visiting the library is the most popular cultural activity in the United States, outpacing visits to movie theaters, sporting events, musical concerts, museums and zoos (McCarthy, 2020). Borrowing print books is the most popular activity at libraries nationwide, with 64% of library users checking out a book in the last year (Horrigan, 2016). At Worthington Libraries, circulation of physical materials has climbed steadily for over a century and, in the last decade, circulation of downloadable materials is through the roof! We are consistently ranked as the ninth highest circulating library in Ohio, behind only the eight far larger metropolitan systems (State Library of Ohio, 2018). In 2018, Worthington Libraries circulated 4.1 million physical and digital items, with books chief among them. In fact, as of 2018, book borrowing accounts for three-quarters of all our circulation: 62% print, 10% digital and 3% audio.

Public support of Worthington Libraries remains high. The number of registered borrowers has climbed steadily over the years. In fact, the number of cardholders currently exceeds the total population of our service district. We have easily passed two levies in the last 15 years, with 58% of voters supporting the library levy in 2005 and a whopping 71% in 2013. We’re not alone. From 2015-2019, 96% of all library ballot issues across the state of Ohio passed (Ohio Library Council, 2015-2019). Nationally, more than two-thirds of people say that closing libraries would have an impact on them and their families and their communities (Horrigan, 2016). At Worthington Libraries, we regularly hear from patrons praising their experiences at our libraries and their interactions with our library staff; all three of our libraries have garnered near-5-star ratings on Facebook, Google and Yelp. Worthington Libraries is also one of only eight libraries in the country to have received a five-star rating in every Index of Public Library Service published by *Library Journal* (Lance, 2019).

That’s not to say that some library services haven’t seen a decrease in usage over the same time period. Nationally, the percentage of people visiting libraries to get help from librarians has declined in recent years and few people report going to libraries to use new technology like 3-D printers (Horrigan, 2016). Likewise, at Worthington Libraries over the last decade, in-person reference transactions have steadily declined and adoption of those novel materials and services we work hard to develop and promote has been mixed.

In this climate of possibility, we must look past the hype coming from both outside and within the library community. We must make a clear-eyed assessment of how the library fits into people’s lives and where the library fits into our evolving community. This report covers the findings of a

2018 research study in depth and synthesizes those with the findings of four other surveys conducted since 2008 and more than a decade of usage statistics. This comprehensive analysis has identified consistent patterns in people's library use, offering us deep insights into what our patrons value about the library and how the library measures up within the community. As we chart a course forward, we must use these insights to consider how we can be the best stewards of taxpayer dollars and provide our patrons with library services that will enrich their lives and enhance our community.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research questions

In April 2018, in partnership with OCLC, we set out to replicate *The Many Faces of Digital Visitors and Residents* study (Connaway et al., 2017) (abbreviated below as V&R) in a public library setting. We formulated the following research questions:

- How does library use differ between occasional library patrons and frequent library patrons?
 - What are the distinct styles of library use?
 - What are the most significant factors influencing library use?
 - Do individuals develop personal library use styles which evolve over time and / or for specific needs or goals?; are library use styles influenced primarily by life events?
 - Is library use influenced by the availability of new library services and initiatives?; is library use relatively static among individuals and / or within particular life events?
 - What distinguishes the library from other services available in the community?
 - What is the relationship (if any) between library use and library awareness?

Although this study was originally designed to examine differences between occasional and frequent patrons—*visitors* and *residents*—our analysis did not uncover any consequential differences in library use between patrons we identified with low and high levels of library engagement, as will be described below. Instead, this report recasts and refocuses our original research questions and will address the following questions:

What is the nature of library use among Worthington Libraries patrons?

- What are the most significant factors influencing individuals' library use?
 - What role does the library play in individuals' lives?
 - Is library use influenced by the availability of new library services and initiatives?
 - What is the relationship (if any) between library use and library awareness?
- What distinguishes the library from other services available in the community?

Data collection

This study uses a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, collecting quantitative data from a structured survey followed by qualitative data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The survey was designed to gain insight into what sorts of activities a broad swath of our patrons is undertaking, while the interviews allowed us to develop deeper

understanding of the motivations behind and outcomes of patron activities. We viewed the findings of this research against the backdrop of four prior surveys as well as two decades of annual usage statistics. Triangulating both data collection methods and data sources in this way ensures the credibility of these findings by allowing for cross-checking data and interpretations (Guba, 1981).

Survey

Survey questions

The survey consisted of two series of questions. The first series of questions focused on how recently people had undertaken 44 activities, both at the library and elsewhere in the community, both in-person and online. In order to compare people's habits at the library with similar outlets in the community, 40 of these activities were matched into 20 pairs, such as *attended a program or event at the library* and *attended a program or event at a community center, park, museum or other location*. The four remaining activities are comprised of two library-specific activities and two non-library activities, such as *returned items I borrowed at the library* and *used a notary at a bank, copy shop or other business*.

The second series of questions focused on people's awareness of, use of and interest in 42 library services and materials, especially those that are niche, newer or non-traditional, such as *voice assistants* or *car jump starters*.

We included four questions collecting demographic information about respondents, including age range, gender identity, preferred library and ZIP code. Finally, we concluded the survey with a question to recruit participants for follow-up interviews, asking only those 18 years old and older to opt in and include contact details. As an incentive to participation, we offered a \$20 Target gift card, purchased with library funds. (See Appendix A to view the full survey instrument.)

Survey procedures

The survey was made available online using SurveyMonkey for one month, from August 1-31, 2018. A pop-up invitation appeared on the library website and catalog. The survey was linked from the library homepage and we further promoted the survey in our e-newsletter and on our Facebook page. Print copies of the survey were available in all three libraries for the duration of the survey.

Table 1. Frequency of survey responses by source

Source	% of total
Website popup	52.3%
Catalog popup	25.9%
E-newsletter	16.7%
Social media post	1.1%
Print	0.1%
Homepage link	0.0%

Survey respondents

In all, there were 1,556 responses to the survey, with 1,288 fully completed through to the demographic questions. Results in this report are based on the 1,288 completed responses.

Age

About half (51%) of the survey respondents are 55 and older and two-thirds (67%) are older than 45. The distribution of ages of the survey respondents skews older than the overall population of the Worthington school district according to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), where about one-quarter (24%) are 55 or older and just over a third (38%) are 45 or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a).

Table 2. Frequency of survey responses by age

Age range	% of total	2018 ACS
under 8	0.1%	
8-11	0.3%	25.5%
12-17	2.5%	
18-24	2.6%	6.1%
25-34	9.9%	16.0%
35-44	17.5%	14.9%
45-54	16.0%	13.2%
55-64	23.1%	11.5%
65+	28.0%	12.8%

At the same time, respondents under age 18 are significantly underrepresented when compared to the Worthington school district's overall population in the 2018 ACS: 3% in the survey and 26% in the ACS. (The U.S. Census Bureau uses different age brackets for those under age 18, making it difficult to compare specific age groups.)

The results of the survey showed some differences among respondents by age group and will be discussed below. Response rates for those under 18 will be combined.

Gender identity

Female survey respondents outnumber male respondents by more than 3-to-1: 74% compared with 23%. Compared to the Worthington school district's overall population according to the 2018 ACS—53% female compared with 47% male—women are significantly overrepresented in this survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). The gender disparity is in keeping with our previous research: a 2016 survey had 71% women and 29% men responding, which had climbed from a 2008 survey with 57% women and 43% men responding. Further, national research has found that women visit libraries twice as frequently as men (McCarthy, 2020).

Table 3. Frequency of survey responses by gender identity

Gender identity	% of total	2018 ACS
Female	74.4%	53%
Male	22.9%	47%
Prefer not to answer	2.1%	-
Prefer to self-describe	0.6%	-

Just 2% of survey respondents preferred not to specify gender and fewer than 1% elected to self-describe.

The results of the survey showed some differences in responses by those who identified as female and male and will be discussed below.

Library location

Response rates were higher among patrons of Old Worthington Library (OWL), with nearly half the respondents (46%) identifying that as the location they use most. About one-third (36%) use Northwest Library (NWL) most frequently. Worthington Park Library (WPK) patrons made up 13% of respondents. The remaining 4% use other area libraries most often.

Table 4. Frequency of survey responses by preferred library

Preferred library	% of total
Old Worthington	46%
Northwest	36%
Worthington Park	13%
Other	4%

There were some differences in survey responses by respondents who preferred different library locations, which will be discussed below.

Home ZIP code

Respondents listed 65 unique home ZIP codes. Nearly two-thirds (63%) listed one of three ZIP codes—43085, 43235 and 43065—adjacent to each of our three libraries.

Table 5. Frequency of survey responses by ZIP code

ZIP code	% of total
43085	32%
43235	19%
43065	12%
Others	37%

ZIP codes were collected primarily to provide continuity with previous research and were not used to analyze survey responses.

IP address

Based on IP addresses associated with each survey response, the majority of respondents took the survey outside our libraries. Just over one-tenth (12%) took the survey using library computers.

Table 6. Frequency of survey responses by IP address

Source	% of total
Library IP	12%
Non-library IP	88%

The results of the survey showed some differences among respondents based on whether they took the survey using library computers and will be discussed below.

Interview interest

Of the 1,251 respondents over 18 who fully completed the survey, 555 (44%) expressed interest in participating in interviews.

Interviews

Interview participants

Of the survey respondents who expressed interest in participating in interviews, we decided to select 30, balancing for gender and age. We planned to select 18 women and 12 men, reflecting the higher survey response rates among women. We also planned to select a total of 6 participants each in the age groups between 35-64 and 4 participants each in the age ranges between 18-34 and 65+.

Because we originally set out to identify differences based on levels of library usage—occasional and frequent patrons—we used the survey responses to calculate a use score for each respondent by counting the number of library activities they reported undertaking in the last month, for a maximum score of 22. When making final selections across genders and age groups, we favored respondents with very high use scores to represent the most widely-engaged library users and respondents with very low use scores to represent the less widely-engaged library users.

Table 7. Selection of interview participants by demographic categories

Age	Female		Male	
	High use	Low use	High use	Low use
18-24	1	1	1	1
25-34	1	1	1	1
35-44	2	2	1	1
45-54	2	2	1	1
55-64	2	2	1	1
65+	1	1	1	1
Total	9	9	6	6

Finally, we aimed to represent participants with a variety of preferred library locations.

Table 8. Preferred libraries of selected interview participants

Preferred library	Participants
Old Worthington	14
Northwest	6
Worthington Park	9
Other	1

Starting in early October 2018, about six weeks after the conclusion of the survey, potential interviewees were contacted by email and asked to fill out a second online survey affirming their continued interest in participating and indicating their availability to come into the library to be interviewed. Respondents were then contacted by email and phone to schedule interviews. Successive rounds of invitations were issued until we scheduled and completed 30 interviews.

Interview questions

Interview questions mirrored the V&R interview questions. Our third question uses the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) and was customized to each interviewee based on any particular distinctive responses to the survey. For instance, if an interviewee reported looking for reading recommendations online in the last week, but only in the last year at the library, we might have focused that question on looking for reading recommendations.

1. Tell me how you typically use the library.
 - Probes: In what ways do you use the library—for entertainment, to do research, to use technology, to get help, etc.? What kinds of things do you borrow? Do you spend time at the library, or just pass through? Do you come to the library by yourself, or with others? Who? Do you attend programs? Do you interact with library staff? How so? Do you interact with other library patrons? How so? How do you use the library website and catalog? Do you always do the same things, or do you try new things? How do you find out about what's new at the library?
2. Think about the last few times you used the library, or the library website or catalog—what surprised you? Did you notice something new?
 - Probes: How did you feel about that? Has this changed the way you use the library?
3. In your survey, you mentioned that you _____. Tell me about the most recent time you _____. (Repeat twice for two different activities.)
 - Probes: Where did you start when deciding to ____? What led you to choose ____? What was your goal? What were you hoping to accomplish? Did you consider any other alternatives along the way? Were you satisfied with your experience ____? Was anything missing from your experience ____? For a community activity: At any point did you think of the library when ____? Do you think your experience ____ would have been different at or by using the library? How so? For a library activity: Do you think your experience ____ would have been different elsewhere than the library? How so?
4. What life changes or big plans do you have in the next year? This could be a new child in the family, changes with your job or career, going to school, moving, making a big purchase, pursuing health or fitness goals, planning a vacation, pursuing a hobby, that sort of thing.
 - Probes: What's prompting or motivating this change / your plans? Where are you in the process? What information do you need? How would you prefer to get information (online, in person, from friends / family, on my own)? Will the library play a part? In what ways might you use the library differently in the next year, as a result of this change / your plans?
5. If you had a magic wand, what would you change about the library to make it better for you and your life?
 - Probes: What would you want to be able to do? See? How would it be different? What would it look like? Would it offer online or in-person services?

(See Appendix B for the full interview script.)

Interview procedures

Interviews were conducted at Old Worthington Library by two library staff members and three OCLC staff members. Participants indicated their informed consent for participation in this study before the interview commenced. (See Appendix C for the consent form.) At the conclusion of the interview, participants were given the \$20 Target gift card.

Seven library staff members took notes during the interview using a laptop. Interviews were also audio-recorded and note takers referred to the audio recordings afterwards to clarify and clean up their notes. Interviews were not transcribed word-for-word.

We completed the 30 interviews between October 22 and December 20, 2018, with interviews scheduled on weekdays, evenings and weekends. Interviews lasted from 15 minutes to one hour, averaging 32 minutes in duration. The notes for all 30 interviews totaled 203 pages.

Data analysis

Survey analysis

Immediately upon conclusion of the survey, we exported the complete survey results from SurveyMonkey in XLS format for further analysis.

For the first series of activity questions, library staff used Microsoft Excel to calculate the percentage of respondents who said they had completed each activity in the specified timeframes.

As part of our original line of inquiry into differences based on levels of library usage, we sought to identify respondents with low and high engagement with the library. We assigned scores based on the timescale answers to the 22 library activity questions. For each respondent, each response of "In the last week" was assigned 5 points, "In the last month" 4 points, "In the last six months" 3 points, "In the last year" 2 points, "More than 1 year ago" 1 point and "Never" and "Not sure" 0 points. With 22 total library activities, possible total scores could range from 0 to 110. After calculating a total score for each respondent, the actual range was 0 to 109. Using Excel, the mean score was calculated to be 52 with a standard deviation of 18. Respondents scoring one standard deviation above (> 70) and below (< 34) the mean were designated as high library engagement and low library engagement, respectively. Those within one standard deviation of the mean (≤ 70 and ≥ 34) were designated as average library engagement.

We then further calculated the percentages of respondents who said they had completed each activity in the specified timeframes by library engagement level as well as by gender, age, preferred library and response location.

We produced 100% stacked bar charts color coded by timeframe to visualize differences in rates of usage across the different groupings. Displaying charts for the paired activities side-by-side permitted us to easily identify differences in rates of usage between the library and elsewhere and among different groups. (See Appendix D to view the activity bar charts.)

For the second series of library services questions, library staff used Excel to calculate the percentage of respondents who indicated awareness of, interest in and usage of each service. We likewise calculated the percentages by gender, age, preferred library, response location and library engagement level. We used conditional formatting in data tables to produce heat maps to visualize differences in response rates for different services and among different groups. (See Appendix E to view the service heat maps.)

In viewing the bar charts and heat maps, there is a clear pattern when it comes to respondents by library engagement level. Those with high library engagement exhibit higher levels of engagement

with other non-library activities and those with low library engagement exhibit lower engagement elsewhere, similar to findings of national research (Pew Research Center, 2014). (We're reminded of La Rochefoucauld's maxim, "Doers do.") Those with high library engagement also have higher rates of awareness of, interest in and use of library services, while those with low library engagement have lower rates. While this finding is not without some interest, we do not see any consequences to the library. This report will not address library engagement levels further.

Interview analysis

Interview notes were imported into QSR NVivo software, version 11 for analysis. We started with the V&R Code Book developed by OCLC. The research team added 56 new codes to more adequately capture factors that arise in the public library setting. Examples include entirely new facets to describe *Activities* and *Genres*, as well as new codes in existing facets such as *Atmosphere/Ambience* (under Agency > Decision/Choice) and *Family/Relationships/Children* (under Situation/Context > Personal). (See Appendix F to view the revised V&R Code Book.)

Preliminary coding according to this scheme was completed by a team consisting of two library staff members and two OCLC staff members. In May 2019, the team began by coding a single interview according to the updated V&R Code Book. Intercoder reliability was calculated by OCLC staff and, after achieving a Holsti's Coefficient of Reliability score of .74 and a Scott's Pi score of .73, we divided up the transcripts equally among the team to complete the coding. Coding of all 30 interviews was completed in July 2019.

Further coding by interview question was completed by library staff in January 2020. (See Appendix G to view the interview question coding scheme.) Within each interview question, open coding was used to identify further key themes using a more inductive approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Analysis according to a combination of the V&R Code Book and the interview question coding scheme was used to organize and report the findings here.

Prior research

In order to identify longitudinal trends, the analysis below references the findings of four previous patron surveys undertaken by Worthington Libraries in the last 12 years.

The first, the 2008 Technology Survey (abbreviated below as 2008 Tech), was conducted online and targeted at library patrons, resulting in 495 responses (Reuter, 2008). This survey was used to better understand our patrons' access to and experience with a variety of technologies and was intended to guide our efforts, especially in terms of emerging social media. Several questions were duplicated from OCLC's *Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World* (DeRosa, 2007).

The second, the 2009 Library Services & Programs Survey, again targeted library patrons and was conducted both online and on paper, resulting in 5,984 responses (Reuter, 2009). This survey was undertaken on the heels of the 2009 state budget cuts to the Public Library Fund and was intended to guide us in making our own cuts to services and programs. Survey questions asked patrons to rate a variety of services and programs as *essential*, *nice to have* or *unnecessary*, both at a personal level and for the community.

Also in 2009, the Worthington Area 360° project was conducted by consulting firm Communicā on behalf of the City of Worthington, Worthington Schools and Worthington Libraries (Management Partners, Inc., 2010). It included focus groups as well as a phone survey of residents of the Worthington school district with 600 responses, assessing perceptions of the community and performance on key services and programs.

Most recently, in 2016 we used the top task approach (McGovern, 2015) to survey library patrons with the Tasks & Interests Survey (abbreviated below as 2016 T&I) both online and in print, resulting in 999 responses (Reuter, 2016). We sought to identify the tasks people undertake at the library and the interests they pursue. Afterward, we used the core model approach (Aalen, 2015) to cluster tasks into 10 core library service areas. Many of the tasks were carried over to this survey and the core library service areas we identified have been used to organize and present the findings below.

The comparisons between surveys are not always perfectly precise. The activities, services and materials referenced in the questions and responses in the 2008 Tech and 2016 T&I surveys are often close, but not identical to the current survey, e.g.,

- 2008 Tech
What have you done on the Worthington Libraries website in the last year?
 - Looked for book recommendations
- 2016 T&I
What do you do on the library's website and online and catalog?
 - Look for reading recommendations for myself
- 2018
When was the most recent time you looked on the website for reading recommendations?
 - In the last week
 - In the last month
 - In the last 6 months
 - In the last year
 - More than 1 year ago
 - Never
 - Not sure

Further, the current survey asked people to report how recently they undertook a particular activity; while the 2008 Tech survey specified whether people had undertaken an activity in the last year, the 2016 T&I survey only asked people to indicate whether or not they undertake a particular activity, which could reasonably be interpreted as *ever* or *regularly* or *recently*, among other possibilities. Finally, both 2009 surveys gauged *attitudes* rather than *behaviors*. Findings from the 2009 surveys will be presented in the narrative, but not in data tables.

Usage statistics

As part of this work, we also gathered historical usage statistics to provide additional context for trends over time in various library activities. Statistics are available for different time periods for different activities. For instance, downloadable materials only became available in large numbers

around 2010. And we gained the capability to track catalog searches and account logins only after our change to a new Integrated Library System in 2013 and completion of our transition to Google Analytics for tracking traffic to our website and catalog in 2015. Statistics will be tracked since inception, with the start year indicated, and then at 1-, 5- and 10-year intervals whenever possible. A sparkline is also included to visualize the overall trend over time.

Limitations of the study

While the research design outlined above was undertaken with care to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings in this report, there are limitations to this study, particularly as relates to transferability to other populations.

The survey was only made available online and in-person through the library, therefore both survey respondents and interview participants represent library users. These findings likely do not represent non-users of the library.

Survey response rates were very low among those under 18 and interviews were not conducted with that population. Findings for young people may not be reliable.

Finally, we did not collect data about socio-economic or cultural background in our survey or our interviews. Survey respondents and interview participants may not be representative of the Worthington City School District. Further, communities with different socio-economic makeup than Worthington may exhibit different behaviors and attitudes. These findings may not apply to all public libraries.

FINDINGS

Library activities

Findings from the survey and interviews will be organized into 10 core library service areas, identified by our prior internal research described above. The findings will be presented in order of prominence, with the library activities that were undertaken by the most people discussed first. For brevity, throughout this report, activities will be referred to by short labels. (See Appendix H to view the key to the activity short labels.)

Table 9. Library core service areas and activities undertaken in the last year

Core service area	Activity	▼ Last year
Borrowing	Checked out items	97%
Borrowing	Browsed online	95%
Borrowing	Picked up items	94%
Borrowing	Browsed in person	93%
Account management	Managed account	90%
Facility use	Stayed 30 minutes	87%
Background information	Planned a visit	82%
Research and recommendations	Asked question in-person	76%
Programs and events	Searched for programs	75%
Research and recommendations	Sought reading recommendations	71%
Research and recommendations	Researched a topic	68%
Technology	Used computers	53%
Digital and online services	Downloaded media	52%
Programs and events	Attended program	50%
Technology	Used wireless	50%
Digital and online services	Used subscription resource	49%
Children's services	Brought children	41%
Office services	Used copier / printer / fax / scanner	33%
Research and recommendations	Asked question online	24%
Background information	Volunteered	7%

Within each core library service area, results from the current survey will be presented along with results from the 2008 Tech and 2016 T&I surveys when relevant, followed by related usage

statistics and finally results from the interviews. To convey the voices of the interview participants, we will include direct quotes with attribution by participant identification number, gender, age range and preferred library.

Borrowing

Virtually all survey respondents report undertaking borrowing activities—checking out items, browsing the shelves, browsing the catalog online and picking up items—with the vast majority having undertaken each activity within the last month.




Table 10. Library borrowing activities, 2008-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever		
Checked out items	90%	97%	100%	-	-
Browsed online	87%	95%	98%	77%	74%
Picked up items	81%	94%	98%	85%	67%
Browsed in person	73%	93%	99%	75%	-

These findings have been fairly consistent in our last decade of research. In 2008, we found that using the online catalog to search for and reserve books were the top activities online, undertaken by nearly three-quarters (74%) and two-thirds of respondents, respectively. In 2016, 95% reported participating in at least one borrowing activity, with three-quarters or more undertaking each individual borrowing activity. In our 2009 library services and programs survey, the top five services were all related to borrowing. All respondents rated books as essential or nice to have, and nearly all rated other borrowing services the same way: online catalog (96%) and ability to pick up items at any location (92%).

Our usage statistics align with these findings. Circulation of physical materials has increased steadily for a century. Catalog searches have increased over the last several years. The number of hold requests took a leap in 2016 and climbed for two years; as of last year, it may be levelling off. Over the last few years, holds have averaged one-fifth of all circulation of physical materials.

Table 11. Library borrowing statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Circulation of physical materials ¹		2%	14%	7%	113% (2000)
Catalog searches		9%	7%	-	7% (2015)
Catalog hold requests created		-4%	50%		51% (2014)

Our interviews offer us valuable insights into what's behind these trends in borrowing. We opened the interviews by asking participants to describe how they typically use the library. All but one (29) mentioned borrowing as central to their library use, with more than one-third (11) mentioning borrowing exclusively.

Yeah, for me, typically I use it mostly for books. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

Mainly I use it for movies with my husband. Also, I check out books for research on certain things. I started checking out music CDs recently. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

Obviously, I utilize the lovely collection of books. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

I order books online, often using the search capability. Often just searching for specific books, and then I come in and pick them up when I get the email. Which is an awesome service. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

(The one participant who did not mention borrowing in answer to this initial question did talk about borrowing extensively throughout the interview.)

When asked directly about their borrowing habits, all 30 participants discussed borrowing books. All but one (29) mentioned print books, seven mentioned audiobooks and five mentioned e-books. More than half (16) said they borrow nonfiction and just under half (13) mentioned fiction. Just two mentioned children's materials and one graphic novels. Half (15) mentioned borrowing video. Just a few mentioned other formats including music (5), non-traditional items (4)—such as Adventure Kits, Launchpad tablets or mobile hotspots—videogames (2) and magazines (1).

When asked how they used the library website, nearly all (27) said they search the catalog. More than half (17) said they typically place reserves.

I search for something and put it on hold and it'll get sent to the library, that's 95% of what I use it for. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

I will browse an author or a title I have found somewhere to see if's available. I know I end up getting waitlisted for some things—it doesn't bother me. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

¹ Usage statistics for "Circulation of physical materials" does not include 2019 data.

More than one-third (12) said they search for known items, with four participants mentioning that they learn about books from the media.

I usually am very specific about a particular book that I want. So I go in and put in the book title and reserve it. [#07-F/65+/NWL]

I look up items on the catalog that I've seen on TV or read about in magazine. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

Just four said they browse by topic or author to find new items.

We also asked participants to reflect on a recent time they had completed a specific activity and whether they were satisfied or if something was missing from their experience. We talked with just more than one-third (11) of the participants about their experiences borrowing at the library, including checking out items and browsing online and in person.

All 11 participants were satisfied with their experience borrowing. Nine felt there was nothing missing from their borrowing experience.

No one else can beat the experience I got at the library. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

I've always loved libraries. I'd never choose anything else. [#07-F/65+/NWL]

(One participant wished for recommendations based on borrowing history and another wished for more digital content for travel resources.)

As above, six participants discussed seeking a known item when borrowing, either a favorite author (4) or series (1), or a specific title (1). Three participants discussed seeking materials by topic (such as travel) and two participants mentioned genre (such as graphic novels).

All three participants who discussed their experiences browsing in person spoke about looking for eye-catching items.

I went to the teen area, the graphic novel area... Then I looked at the actual things that catch my eye, because of the displays, and books that are set up on the shelf. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

I was looking for an author I'm reading from. I know where those books are, so I just browsed the shelves to see what caught my eye. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

Most participants described intrinsic motivations behind their borrowing, including personal recreation (6) or family entertainment (2). The other three cited extrinsic motivations, including a book group, professional development and a presentation.

I wanted to find a book I like. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

I've been looking for more YA books to read, for personal reading. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

My husband and I are going through all the Marvel movies. We've been back and forth to the library a lot! [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

My book group makes a lot of my decisions for me. [#07-F/65+/NWL]

I trust the author's opinion on matters, it's loosely related to my profession—about technology trends. I thought I could gain a lot by skimming the book. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]

Most of the participants (8) mentioned cost as an important factor in their borrowing.

I like free because we are on a tight budget. As long as it's free I'm happy. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

Especially for books that I'm only going to read once or not keep around, checking out from the library is a much greater use of time and money. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

I'm a cheapskate. I don't buy books on Amazon. The library has everything I could want. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

Three participants spoke about the convenience and ease of borrowing at the library.

It's super simple. All I have to do is type in what I need, select Blu-ray. It's the only thing that pops up. Hit reserve and I'm on and off in three minutes. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

I'm still just amazed that I can sit in my home office, request it and drive two miles to pick it up. It blows my mind how well it works. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]

Finally, three participants spoke about trusting authoritative resources when it comes to borrowing at the library.

The authenticity, reliability and trust in the resources at the library [is important to me]. There's no commercial benefit ... from the books in the library. No one is pushing a book because of personal gain. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

I was going to give a presentation... So, I had to get the best information. [#04-F/45-54/OWL]

In summary, borrowing at the library is universal, and always has been. People are borrowing books, generally for personal, recreational reasons. Cost is a key factor behind people's borrowing; convenience and authority also factor in. Overall, people are highly satisfied with the borrowing experience the library offers, often effusive in their praise.

Account management

Nearly all respondents (90%) reported managing their library account online (such as renew items, pay fines) in the last year, with nearly three-quarters (71%) doing so in the last month.

Table 12. Library account activities, 2008-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	Last year	Ever		
Account management	71%	90%	94%	74%	60%

In 2008, between half and two-thirds of those surveyed reported completing a variety of account-related activities: renew items (67%), check reserves status and borrowed items (60%) and check fines (47%). By 2016, those numbers had mostly climbed: renew items (74%), check reserves status (72%) and check fines (34%).

Account logins have climbed modestly in the last year, but have dropped overall in the last five years. With the launch of automatic renewals in 2015, our patrons may have less need to log into their accounts.

Table 13. Library account usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Account log ins		9%	-19%	-	-19% (2015)

Account management wasn't discussed extensively in our interviews, but five participants did mention accessing their library accounts when asked how they used the library website and catalog. Four mentioned checking the status of their borrowed items and two mentioned checking the status of their reserves.

What I use it the most for is reserving books, checking the status—I probably have 15-20 books checked out, so I have to keep track of what's due and how many renewals do I have left. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

Primarily I look up my account and remember what books my kids have hidden around the house. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

A couple times a week at home, I check my queue for holds. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

During the course of the interview, four participants praised our borrowing policies.

The policies—the automatic renewals and fine free—are so nice. I prefer to do my borrowing from this library because I like the borrowing policies. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

It's neat that we automatically renew things. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

I love that there's no fines anymore. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Changing policies around late fees was very helpful in the way I use the library [#12-M/45-54/WPK]

In summary, people are satisfied with the account management tools available to them through the library. They appreciate our borrowing policies.

Facility use

The vast majority (87%) of respondents reported spending more than 30 minutes at the library in the last year, with nearly two-thirds (62%) doing so in the last month.

Table 14. Library facility activities, 2018

Activity	2018		
	Last month	Last year	Ever
Stayed 30 minutes	62%	87%	97%

The 2016 survey is the first time we asked specifically about in-person library activities. The vast majority of respondents (82%) in that survey reported participating in at least one in-person activity—the top in-person activity was using the public restroom (53%) and other in-person activities including drinking from the water fountain (37%), using as a quiet place to read (35%) or relax / hang out (26%). Younger people, those under 25, reported higher rates—around double—of these activities than older respondents.

Our usage statistics seem to run somewhat counter to these findings. After a modest peak in 2010, attendance in the library has declined, with a drop of just over a quarter (27%) over the decade.

Table 15. Library facility usage statistics, 2000-2018

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2018	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Attendance in library ²		-4%	-15%	-27%	-17% (2006)

In our interviews, we asked participants if they typically spent time at the library or just passed through. Of the 28 participants who engaged with the question, answers were evenly split, with 12 each saying they spent time or just passed through and the remaining four saying they did both evenly.

When remarking on why they spent time at the library, half of the participants (8) focused on pleasantly passing the time, using words like “chill,” “hang,” “waste time,” “linger” and “poke around” and highlighting the library as a place for relaxation.

Sometimes it's just nice to go in. I love the look of books so sometimes I go in and just literally poke around. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

It's a nice place to sit and just chill. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

I usually spend time here. It's quiet and relaxing. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

It's actually my kids' favorite way to “waste time.” [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

When I don't have a project with a plan, I come to the library to browse what I like with no goal. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

My husband and I like to come and browse. It's relaxing for us. Sometimes we'll spend an hour just looking around. We initially come in to pick up items that we found online but end up staying. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

Three participants spoke about the strong first impression the library makes when you enter.

There's just a feeling when you walk into a library... When you walk in the door, for me, it's a, whew, relaxing experience. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

² Usage statistics for “Attendance in library” does not include 2019 data.

Just, visually, it has always been nice to approach the library and ... to see the garden that's been worked on a lot and bigger, to see that as you approach the front door, just makes you feel better about going the rest of the way in. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

Right when you walk in the front door [you can tell] it's a 5-star library. You spend literally 10 seconds in this library, you realize real fast that this library is one of the best, not just in probably Ohio, probably in the country as a system entirely. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

Of the 12 participants who said they only pass through, three cited busy schedules and one each mentioned lack of convenience, online availability and unpleasant atmosphere as deterrents.

When I go inside, it's always really cool and I'm glad I went in. I just don't always have the time. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

I prefer to get things [using the after-hours pick up lockers] because it seems like I can never get there when they're open or I don't want to walk in to pick it up. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

With access to so many things through the library online, I spend less time in the building than I used to. [#01-M/65+/OWL]

I don't go in very much, but I would if it was less crowded and I knew I could get a nice comfy spot to do work. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]

We asked three participants to reflect on their experiences spending time at the library. All three were satisfied with their experience and felt nothing was missing. One described using the library for professional work, one for academic work and one for personal reasons.

All three participants cited the comfortable, peaceful atmosphere of the library.

There are comfy chairs. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

In general, I'd say the ambience is everybody is quiet. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

I can just say that I do enjoy the Reading Room experience here. I feel like I can curl up on a couch or sit at a table and focus on just reading, which I find great. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

All three participants used the library to avoid distractions.

Sometimes I'm like, oh, it's really chill, or it's raining outside, or I'm avoiding my chores. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

I have the tendency to turn on Spotify and all this other stuff so a quiet study place turns into a rock concert in a matter of eight seconds. With the library, it's just one of those things where everybody is quiet, everybody is doing their own thing, stick with the status quo, I can actually get some work done. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

I think there are times when I'd rather read here than at home, just because I have far too much distraction at home. I have my TV going, I have music, I have movies, sports going on, so I definitely use the library as a way to tune out distractions and sit there and focus. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

Two participants listed the variety of amenities available to them in the library, including helpful staff.

I get on my laptop and do that, and obviously use the Wi-Fi... I'm there already selecting books. I'm using the UV therapy light, it helps to relieve depression... The people are really friendly... It's convenient that it is next to Kroger, if I have to go pick up stuff for dinner. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

If I need to use a room, it's open, it's there. If I need to sit down in a quiet spot, I can... The staff as well, if I need help they're willing to help me at any time. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

In summary, the library is valued as a comfortable and welcoming place to relax and pass time. The library offers many a peaceful atmosphere to find focus away from their busy lives. These busy lives, however, may prevent some people from spending more time at the library than they might otherwise wish.

Research and recommendations

Nearly all survey respondents (91%) have talked to a librarian or library staff member in person to get information or recommendations at some point, with about three-quarters (76%) doing so in the last year and just 40% in the last month. Similarly, the vast majority of respondents (88%) have at some point researched a topic at the library, with about two-thirds (68%) doing so in the last year and less than half (42%) in the last month.

Table 16. Library research and recommendation activities, 2008-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever		
In-person reference	40%	76%	91%	46%	-
Reading recommendations	46%	71%	78%	29%	20%
Researched a topic	42%	68%	88%	41%	49%
Online reference	7%	24%	41%	11%	9%

Respondents had much lower rates when it comes to online reference. Less than half have ever emailed the library to ask a question or get help, only about a quarter (24%) of respondents did so in the last year and just 7% emailed in the last month.

About three-quarters (78%) have at some point used the library website to seek reading recommendations, nearly as many (71%) in the last year, but less than half (46%) in the last month.

These findings are in line with our own previous research. In 2009, about half of the survey respondents (49%) considered in-person reference essential. In 2016, just under half (46%) reported talking to a librarian or library staff member. As far as researching at the library, in 2008, about half (49%) reported using the library website to look up information on a topic they're interested in. In 2016, less than half (41%) reported researching or learning about a topic they were interested in at the library. When it comes to online reference, in 2008, just 9% reported contacting a librarian by email and in 2009 only 12% considered email reference essential. In 2016, just 11% reported asking a question via email. Regarding book recommendations, in 2008, one-

fifth of those surveyed looked for book recommendations. In 2009, just 15% of those surveyed considered book recommendations essential. In 2016, less than a third (29%) reported looking for reading recommendations online at the library.

In the current research, there were some differences in these activities by response location.

Table 17. Library research activities, by survey response location

Researched a topic			
Response location	Last month	Last year	Ever
In library	74%	89%	94%
Remote	37%	65%	87%

Those respondents who took the survey inside the library reported higher rates of researching a topic at the library and talking to a librarian than those who took the survey outside the library.

Table 18. Library in-person reference activities, by survey response location

In-person reference			
Response location	Last month	Last year	Ever
In library	62%	88%	92%
Remote	37%	74%	91%

Looking at usage statistics, although reference transactions have seen an uptick in the last two years, the trend has been steadily downward after a modest peak in 2009.

Table 19. Library research and recommendation usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Reference transactions		7%	-2%	-31%	-22% (2006)
Featured title website pageviews		-4%	-1%	-	-1% (2015)
Email reference transactions		-17%	33%	72%	78% (2009)
Chat reference sessions		-11%	-62%	-77%	-77% (2010)

Online reference is generally trending downward. Email reference is mixed, with usage climbing sharply to a peak in 2013, with a slow decline since then. Chat reference sessions have decreased more significantly: the number of sessions peaked in its first year and has declined by more than three-quarters (77%) since.

In our interviews, all but one participant acknowledged interacting with staff. Half (15) said they interact with staff only occasionally, with several (3) preferring to be self-sufficient.

If I have questions, sometimes, but not every time. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

Typically, I'm here enough, I know my way around; more like one out of 10 times I'm asking for help. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

Nevertheless, several of these participants praised staff for their helpfulness (3) and said they took care to exchange pleasantries (6) with staff.

It's become a lot more convenient that you don't have to necessarily interact with them, but I find that whenever I talk to them they're really helpful and they like having someone to talk to. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

Once in a while, not as much opportunity with the self-checkout. I will stop and say hi. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

The other half (14) described more extensive interactions with staff. Participants most often describe seeking assistance with the mechanics of using the library by asking staff directional (16), technical (4) or account-related (3) questions:

If I have any questions where to find something, if I can't find it myself, I generally ask them. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

I have interacted with them. They're helpful as far as copying paperwork, faxing things. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

Usually at the front desk—if a card is maxed out and I have to get reserves moved to my other card. My kids have damaged books on accident. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

About one-third of participants said they approach staff for recommendations (8) and reference (3), on occasion.

Every now and then, sure, if I'm checking out a book, I might say "Hey—" to see if they know anything about the book I'm checking out, stuff like that. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

We ask for recommendations, more so with the kids. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

When I was looking for a job they helped which was great... They've given me advice on travel and book on tape recommendations. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

Online reference was rarely mentioned by interview participants. During the course of our interviews, just two participants mentioned using online reference. One said she preferred to use online chat or email to contact the library.

For myself, I'm more likely to have questions to have answered through an online chat or email. [#03-F/55-64/OWL]

Another had good experiences chatting online with the library, but also felt it was only useful for certain types of issues.

I just had some phone conversations and some online chatting with a couple different people who were helping me with a new iPad. I was trying to navigate a problem with my Overdrive and my Libby. So that was a lot of help... [I used chat] just once before a while back. This time I had so much more to my question and obviously needed direction... I did get to a point—they were very helpful—but then I realized ... that I needed to come in. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

When asked how they use the library website, three participants mentioned reviewing staff picks.

I enjoy the recommendations on the website. I will pivot off of authors and recommendations. Usually I'm looking for a specific thing, but recently we've been exploring recommendations. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

We asked three participants to reflect on their experiences with research and recommendations at the library. Two talked about seeking recommendations, while one discussed his experience getting help from a staff member. All three were satisfied with their experiences at the library.

Both participants who talked about reading recommendations cited the library as an authority when it comes to reading.

I feel like Staff Picks are by people who read. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

To me, there's more invested in that kind of thing, in the book, in reading. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

Both participants believe that library staff represent the community and their recommendations offer variety.

They're at the library, they're exposed to it, they've probably heard other people coming and going, talking about certain things, their exposure to whatever mediums, the social mediums, whatever they all see and hear and that would just be a good place to start. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

That is one thing I really love about the library, is that I think the material is rather diverse... Especially at a time like this, when everyone is very focused on bubbles...just having different points of view definitely helps. And I think that Staff Picks and the recommendations on the wall usually reflects both. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

One participant wished that online staff picks were highlighted on the shelves at the library with brief reviews.

The third participant interacted with a staff member to get a new library card.

I've never dealt with anyone who didn't seem like they wanted to help, especially for general questions, they always seem willing to help. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

This participant appreciated that the library provides personal attention.

I kind of like having a person there, especially when they seem friendly and nice... It's nice that with the library you can ask really about anything... It's what it needs to be. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

In summary, people are not heavily using the library for research or reading recommendations. The library is recognized as an important resource when it comes to reading and research, but such use is occasional for most people. Interactions with library staff are likewise limited, but staff members are perceived as reliably helpful. Online reference is little used.

Programs and events

Just half of the respondents have attended a library program in the last year, with less than one-fifth (17%) doing so in the last month. Nearly a quarter (22%) have *never* attended a library program.

Table 20. Library program and event activities, 2008-2018






Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever		
Searched for programs	44%	75%	84%	31%	24%
Attended program	17%	50%	78%	32%	-

These findings are consistent with our previous research. In the 2016 survey, only about a third (32%) of respondents said they attend library programs and events. People's attitudes toward programs also indicate a low level of interest. In our 2009 survey, more than half of the respondents rated each of the program types—such as school-age programs (52%), story times (56%), teen book groups (58%), music programs (58%) and film programs (59%)—as unnecessary. Around the same time, as part of the Worthington Area 360° project, when asked to rate the importance and performance of the library's programs, a large percentage of those surveyed—between half (47%) and three-quarters (78%), depending on program type—said they did not know enough about library programs to provide a rating.

Respondents search for library programs more than they actually attend. Three-quarters reported checking the library calendar for programs or events in the last year, with nearly half (44%) in the last month. In 2016, around one-third (31%) checked the library calendar for programs and events. In 2008, about one-quarter (24%) looked online for library programs and events.

Views of the online calendar dipped in 2016, climbed and then dipped again last year. Although overall program attendance has been relatively steady for the last decade, that is largely due to children's program attendance. Adult program attendance—and to a lesser extent, teen program attendance—is among our most volatile, with sharp peaks and valleys from year to year.

Table 21. Library program and event usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Online calendar pageviews		-10%	20%	-	20% (2015)
Average attendance per program		-6%	-11%	-8%	7% (2006)
Average attendance per adult program		-43%	1%	-19%	-13% (2009)
Average attendance per teen program		-34%	-23%	3%	-19% (2009)
Average attendance per children's program		2%	-9%	-6%	-4% (2006)

In our interviews, three participants said they use the calendar on the library website to check for programs and events at the library.

[I check] the calendar for events to see if there's something we're interested in doing. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

I check to see if programs are still going. [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

During the course of our interviews, the most frequently mentioned programs by far were for children and families. Nearly half of the participants (12) mentioned children's programs, with eight mentioning story times and three mentioning the Summer Reading Club.

Apart from story times, the programs mentioned most frequently by interview participants were our signature program series, large-scale events or events planned to benefit the Friends Foundation. Six participants talked about author visits, with two mentioning the Dan Rather program specifically. Three participants each mentioned Harry Potter Day, Northwest Library Backyard Concert Series, February by the Fire and Books and Brews. The Freedom Riders exhibit—just wrapping up its run at the start of the interviews—was mentioned by two participants. Two participants singled out these programs as unexpected.

I never thought [Books and Brews] was something a library would do. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

The Freedom Riders—I don't think I had seen that one before. I should also say that I've only been coming here for a year, and that was probably the first time I'd seen exhibits like that. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

Our one-off programs were rarely mentioned. Just four participants mentioned crafting programs, two mentioned lectures and one mentioned book groups.

As far as actually attending programs, just two participants acknowledged doing so regularly. One participant described in detail the ritual of her children circling programs in the Page Turner and

adding them to the family calendar. She also rattled off several specific programs members of her family had attended:

My daughter and son both recently attended the Harry Potter event—she loved it and he is aging out of some of that stuff. They attended a cooking program recently. They're both interested in crafts and cooking. I like what they offer. I've seen a range of things for adults from the educational to the social. We've attended Books and Brews. That might be our favorite. We attend a fair amount. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

However, these two participants were the exception, not the rule. About one-third said they attend programs only occasionally (8) or only with their children (3).

Visited February by the Fire. A friend came to play piano for the event, so I brought the kids to see him play. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

More than half said they do not attend programs at all (10), or hadn't in a long time (7).

Not that I can recall, maybe 15-20 years ago. [#12-M/45-54/WPK]

I haven't recently, but I did when the kids were younger. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

Nearly one-third of the participants cited time as a factor in their non-attendance, in terms of convenience (4) or being too busy (5).

Oh, we've wanted to, but a lot of them are during or after dinnertime for my toddlers, so it's problematic. [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

I don't really have time to get over here for many programs, but I do scan [the monthly e-newsletter]. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

Participants, like this one, often mentioned reading the print and email newsletter and expressed an awareness of library programs, though they do not follow through to attend. When talking about programs, four participants referred to them as something they felt they *ought* to do.

I like to stay home when not at work, so I don't come to as many programs as I should. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

I have not—it seems like most of them are for kids. I know that there are concerts in the summer that I would go to but I never make it for some reason. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]

We asked four participants to reflect in some detail on their experiences with programs and events at the library. Two spoke about programs for their children and two spoke about adult programs for themselves. All four were satisfied with their experiences.

Three of the four participants talked about attending programs to learn, develop skills or discover new viewpoints.

A lot of times the events are to learn how to do something and sometimes it's just for fun. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

My kids have a learning disability and difficulty comprehending English, and they have to be constantly reading something or listening to a book or something to keep practicing their skills. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

It was one of those very relaxed kind of states, where you can just listen to what he has to say, take the notes that he gives out and kind of ask any questions to someone who has the experience with that. I think that's one thing, especially with these talking events or bringing a lecturer in, is trying to get their viewpoint for how they do certain things. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

Two participants emphasized programs as opportunities for socializing.

I love the fact that it helps them be more social. My son is on the shy side. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

I thought I might meet some interesting people. [#03-F/55-64/OWL]

When it comes to children's programs, both parents expressed gratitude for activities that keep their children occupied.

Parents are looking for things to keep kids entertained... Anything they have that is multiple hours that will engage them, I'm super excited about. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

I've always used their library services to help ease the stress of having two LD kids who need my constant attention. It's a huge help to have people who take that off my shoulders and just let me have a few minutes to relax. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

Both participants also cited the personal attention their families received as a major draw.

When you're at the library, you feel like the attention's on the kids and the people taking part in it, want to take part in it—it's always friendly and welcoming. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

Generally, I'm very satisfied because of the engagement. The people delivering the events are actively engaged. I love it... Here is the next level. They're just so nice, so patient and calm. They always take the time with kids especially. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

At the conclusion of our interviews, we asked each participant what would make the library better for their lives. Nearly one-third (8) proposed programs of some sort: a bi-weekly craft series with experts on hand to help with sewing, crochet, quilting, metal work and leather work [#09-F/25-34/WPK]; a series of lunch-and-learn lectures for seniors, stay-at-home parents and workers from downtown [#03-F/55-64/OWL]; a monthly evening lecture series on topics such as health and fitness, household organization and moving [#23-F/45-54/WPK].

Notably, however, of these eight participants, half had earlier told us they did not attend programs and three said they did so only occasionally. When it comes to programs, there is clearly a disconnect between what people say and what they actually do.

In summary, programs and events are not central to people's library use. People tend to be aware of our programs from checking our calendar or reviewing our newsletter, but only some attend and, even then, only occasionally. People attend programs for a variety of reasons, including learning, social interaction and escape. There is greater interest in programs for children and families, as well as large-scale, signature programs. Generally, however, people do not prioritize library programs in their busy lives.

Technology

Three-quarters of survey respondents have used computers at the library, with about half (53%) doing so in the last year and about one-third (32%) in the last month. The numbers are similar for wireless use, with about two-thirds (63%) using wireless, half in the last year and one-third (34%) in the last month.


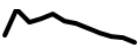
Table 22. Library technology activities, 2008-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever		
Computers	32%	53%	75%	25%	84%
Wireless	34%	50%	63%	28%	-

Looking at our prior research, use of technology at the library has declined in the last decade. In 2008, the vast majority of survey respondents (84%) reported using a library computer, even though most people reported that they had access to a computer at work or school (70%) and at home (80%) and had high-speed internet access at home (63%). In the 2009 survey, less than half (42%) rated access to computers and the internet essential, with about one-quarter (24%) rating wireless access essential. By 2016, just one-quarter reported using library computers for personal reasons and 28% using the wireless network.

Indeed, in the last decade, although we have increased the number of computers we have available to the public, the number of uses per computer has decreased steadily. After an initial peak in 2009, the average number of public uses per computer dropped by nearly half (45%) in the last 10 years. In contrast, the number of wireless sessions has exploded with an increase of 1,810% since 2008! Usage has been levelling off as of the last couple of years.

Table 23. Library technology usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Wireless sessions		15%	104%	652%	1,810% (2008)
Average number of public uses per computer		-17%	-35%	-45%	-23% (2008)

Technology use didn't come up extensively in our interviews, but during the course of our conversations, six participants brought up using the library for internet access.

My son commutes from home to OSU and when he has an online test to take, he goes to the library because our internet is terrible. They have a good high-speed internet connection. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

If the internet is ever out at home, there is access here. [#01-M/65+/OWL]

I'm a mom and I'm still in college and so I'm able to do my homework using the Wi-Fi. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

I have a small business, so I'll work and use the Wi-Fi while my kids browse. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

We also asked two participants to reflect on a recent time they used technology at the library. Both were satisfied with their experience using computers and felt nothing was missing.

The library is great for access to the computer... I cannot think of anything better the library could do... Even the number of computers available is good. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

One participant mentioned using library computers after she experienced an outage at home.

When I first started coming to the library and actually using their computers, I think my computer had gone down—that probably was the initial reason. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

Both participants discussed using the computers to facilitate printing.

I use the computer to print most often because I don't have a printer. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

Sometimes I just need to print something; I can do the work at home, but I might need to print something, so I come here. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

In summary, people are relying less on library computers and are instead bringing their own devices to use on our wireless network. Because many people have access to computers and high-speed internet at home, our computers serve as reliable back up when people experience outages, or are used to access office services.

Digital and online services

Fewer than two-thirds of survey respondents have ever downloaded books, audiobooks, movies and / or music via the library (61%) or used a library subscription resource (64%). About half have downloaded (52%) or used a subscription database (49%) in the last year. Far less reported doing so in the last month—just one-third (31%) downloaded media and one-quarter (26%) used subscription databases.

Table 24. Library digital and online activities, 2008-2018



Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever		
Downloaded media	31%	52%	61%	31%	0%
Subscription resource	26%	49%	64%	27%	29%

These findings have not changed dramatically in the last decade when it comes to databases. In 2008, less than one-third (29%) of those surveyed had used a database. In the 2009 survey, less than half (42%) felt databases were essential. In 2016, only about one-quarter (27%) reported using an online database.

We've seen far greater growth when it comes to digital media. In 2008, barely anyone had downloaded books. The next year, 11% felt downloadable books were essential. By 2016, nearly one-third (31%) reported downloading books and media.

Indeed, circulation of downloadable materials has exploded more than tenfold since 2011! Growth has slowed in recent years and it may have leveled off as of 2018. Clicks through to our subscription resources have been somewhat more volatile, with some sharp peaks in usage in 2014 and 2016, but overall, usage has been relatively steady.

Table 25. Library digital and online usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Circulation of downloadable materials ³		-18%	33%	-	1,382% (2011)
Subscription resource clicks		-8%	16%	14%	16% (2009)

During the course of our interviews, eight participants mentioned using digital and online services at the library. Five participants mentioned borrowing e-books.

Sometimes I use Digital Downloads for e-books. I would rather use physical books, but I will use digital formats through Zinio and the third-party platform for Digital Downloads. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

I was using Overdrive, and I just, last week, downloaded Libby. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

Six participants mentioned using databases. Three mentioned Lynda.com and one each mentioned Consumer Reports, EBSCO, Oxford English Dictionary and Wall Street Journal.

More often than not, I know pretty much where I want to go. So, if I want to go to the Oxford English Dictionary or Lynda.com it's direct to there. [#01-M/65+/OWL]

I check Consumer Reports I'm if looking for something new. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

We asked three participants to reflect on their experiences using digital and online services at the library in more detail. Two participants discussed accessing e-books and one used a database to access newspaper articles.

All three participants cited speed and accessibility as part of their experience accessing digital and online services.

It was really simple; it downloaded really quickly. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

³ Usage statistics for "Circulation of downloadable materials" does not include 2019 data

It's swift. [#07-F/55-64/NWL]

[I was looking for] more information, not readily available just picking up a newspaper here, it's more accessible. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

The two participants accessing e-books appreciated the portability offered by the digital format.

I was going to be driving and it would be convenient. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

When I'm out and about and walking or something I can listen to the book ... It gave me something to do when I was either walking or gardening or something. [#07-F/55-64/NWL]

Two of the three were satisfied with their experience, but one found the process of accessing e-books confusing and preferred borrowing in print.

I know I at one point downloaded something, but I know one of the reasons I don't like to download books is because when it's due, it's gone. And so, I prefer the book... I have downloaded very rarely. [#07-F/55-64/NWL]

In summary, use of e-books has climbed dramatically in the last decade, but still has not found widespread adoption. Although people appreciate the advantages of the digital format, e-books don't fully replace print books for many. Subscription resources are useful to a small population.

Children's services

Two-thirds of survey respondents reported bringing children to the library, with less than half (41%) doing so in the last year and less than one-third (29%) in the last month.

Table 26. Library children's services activities, 2016-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I
	Last month	Last year	Ever	
Brought children	29%	41%	67%	25%

These findings are consistent with prior research. In 2016, one-quarter of survey respondents said they brought children to the library.

As noted above, most respondents in our 2009 survey did not consider programs and events essential or even nice to have, but programs for children did rate the highest. Just over half (52%) rated literacy programs as nice to have or essential and 57% rated the children's summer reading program that highly.

This is one activity that reveals dramatic differences among respondents by age. Those aged 35-44 reported the highest rates of participating in children's activities, with around two-thirds bringing children to the library in the last month—more than twice the overall rate.

Table 27. Library children's services activities, by age

▲ Age	Brought children		
	Last month	Last year	Ever
under 18	41%	51%	51%
18-24	9%	18%	21%
25-34	36%	44%	51%
35-44	68%	77%	83%
45-54	38%	58%	85%
55-64	13%	23%	70%
65+	11%	23%	58%

Although we don't track general attendance of children at the library, we can look specifically at attendance at children's programs. Average attendance per program has been steady over the last decade.

Table 28. Library children's program attendance statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Average attendance per children's program		2%	-9%	-6%	-4% (2006)

In the interviews, when asked about their typical use, bringing children to the library was the second most frequently mentioned activity after borrowing. More than one-third (12) of the participants mentioned bringing children (or grandchildren) to the library.

I am rarely here by myself. Usually I come with kids, ever since they were little. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Most of the time I bring my kids, as a place for my kids to come. They like to play with the iPads, they can read. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

We come to story time, I do toddler story time with my two toddlers. [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

Sometimes I bring my granddaughter to come in and play in the children's room or read books and get books for her. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

Although the survey didn't show dramatic differences by gender, in the interviews, all but one of the participants who mentioned bringing children as part of their typical usage pattern were women.

We asked seven participants to reflect on their experiences bringing children to the library. All were satisfied with their experiences bringing children to the library and six felt there was nothing missing from their experience. (One wished for a CD player she could borrow.)

All seven participants spoke of borrowing and reading books with their children.

They could ... pick out books to go home and I remember leaving with stacks. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

They are very big readers so we would check out books pretty regularly. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

Five mentioned the educational benefits of the library—especially the emphasis on reading and literacy—as a major factor influencing their use of the library.

I was an avid reader and I wanted them to be readers. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

Nobody else has the focus on reading and the availability of books. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

My husband and I are both huge readers and we've always read to the girls. Thankfully they all love to read. So, I wanted to encourage that... When you want to read, you go to the library, right? [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

Several spoke of using the library space (4) to play (4) and socialize (2) and described the library as a safe, welcoming atmosphere (3) to pass the time (2).

We used to come probably at least once a week, just sit in the children's area and read books, roam around. They just loved climbing around. We interacted with the space and whatever kids might be there. It was a great space for them. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

She really likes the play area, the kids' area. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

It was a safe environment. They could be with friends. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

It's a good time killer. Maybe once a week, it's just a happy visit. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

I just take the kids here, chill out, let the kids have fun. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

Four participants mentioned cost and convenience as reasons they chose the library for family activities.

There were good programs that were free. I'm a fan of free. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

I appreciate the library in that I don't have to buy the books. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]

The Worthington Library saves my wallet and it saves me time. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

We live in Worthington and it's an easy access, great location here in Old Worthington. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

At the conclusion of our interviews, we asked participants to describe what would make the library better. Two described a gap in library services for middle-grade children.

I wish there was more for 9- to 12-year-olds. I'm starting to see my son not having as much served up to him for his age. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

One of the things that I've noticed in coming to this library, it's my granddaughter. I bring her to the library, and when I first started bringing her, she was much younger. What I've noticed is that you have this children's room, which she enjoyed, but now she's really at the stage where she's a bit too old to be there... And then you have the teenage room—we really haven't gone into that room, yet. But, I think there's another transition stage between those little-little kids and these kids who are older. If I were to envision something, I would want something in between those two age groups. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

In summary, for people with children (and grandchildren), our children's services are central to library use. Families commonly visit the library together. The top activities with people overall—borrowing and spending time—and common factors influencing library use—cost and convenience—were also prominent when it comes to using the library with children. The library's emphasis on literacy and reading is a major reason people choose the library for their families. Children age out of our current offerings as they get older.

Office services

About two-thirds of survey respondents (61%) have used a copier, printer, scanner or fax machine at the library, with one-third doing so in the last year and 16% in the last month.




Table 29. Library office services activities, 2016-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	
Copier / printer / fax / scanner	16%	33%	61%	24%/21%

These numbers are comparable to our previous research. In 2009, around a third each rated copiers (37%) and printers (32%) as essential. By 2016, around one-quarter reported making copies (24%) and one-fifth (21%) printing documents, photos or other materials.

We do not have long-term usage statistics for our office services. However, use of the scanner and fax machine has increased in the last year. Use of our fax machine climbed especially steeply after 2016, when the service became free. Although the stats show a large increase (255%) on print jobs, we have recently changed vendors for our printers and copiers and our latest stats may not be comparable.

Table 30. Library office services usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Print jobs		255%	-	-	254% (2017)
Scan pages		35%	-	-	42% (2017)
Fax pages		52%	448%		806% (2014)

During the course of our interviews, seven participants mentioned using office services at the library.

I used the computers the other day. We don't have a printer at home, so I had to download an image. [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

Once in a great while, [I use] some of the copying machines. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

As noted above, the interview participants we talked to about using library technology mentioned using computers to print. One participant also brought up other office services.

As far as scanning—at home, I can scan, but I don't have the capacity to scan multiple pages in one document so I could do that here a lot of times. So that opened up the opportunity to do that... There were a couple times when I came here and paid a whole lot of money to fax some things that needed to be faxed immediately. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

Both participants cited cost as an important reason they use the library's office services.

The cost of printing is good. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

The copies are low-cost... Your fax machine used to cost... That's another positive sign at the library, that now you're not charging for that—I don't know if you got a grant or something to help pay for that, but that is a godsend. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

Both participants were satisfied with their experiences using office services at the library, with one especially effusive in his praise.

10 out of 10 experience for printing at the library. The library is great for access to the computer and printing. It's easy to get help at the library with printing and printing is a good cost. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

In summary, some people come to the library for access to printers, scanners and fax service. The low cost of printing and copying and free faxing and scanning are a major appeal.

Background information

Virtually all survey respondents (91%) reported visiting the library website to plan a visit (such as check hours, look up address), with the vast majority (82%) doing so in the last year and less than two-thirds (59%) in the last month.

Table 31. Library background information activities, 2008-2018

Activity	2018			2016 T&I	2008 Tech
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever		
Planned a visit	59%	82%	91%	48%	35%
Volunteered	3%	7%	18%	-	-






Based on our previous research, these numbers are on the rise. In 2008, just over one-third (35%) reported checking library hours on the website and by 2016, this number rose to nearly half (48%). In 2016, we asked separately about looking up the library address and far fewer—just 10%—reported doing so.

Only 18% of respondents had ever volunteered at the library, with just 7% in the last year and 3% in the last month. This activity also showed some distinct differences by age. Nearly half (46%) of those under 18 had volunteered at the library, with about one-fifth (19%) having done so in the last month. (The survey ran just after the conclusion of the summer reading program, staffed by our volunteers.)

We have not regularly asked about volunteering in our surveys, but in 2016, very few respondents (7%) reported checking the library website for volunteer opportunities.

Looking at our usage statistics, use of the website to check library hours has remained steady in recent years.

Table 32. Library information usage statistics, 2000-2019

Statistic	Sparkline, 2000-2019	1-year change	5-year change	10-year change	Since inception
Hours and holidays website pageviews		5%	2%	-	2% (2015)
Number of adult volunteers		-12%	-24%	-15%	341% (2002)
Hours per adult volunteer		-2%	-16%	-28%	-45% (2002)
Number of teen volunteers		-28%	-27%	12%	8% (2002)
Hours per teen volunteer		-23%	-22%	-11%	1% (2002)

The number of adult volunteers has increased modestly to a peak in 2015, with a decline in the last five years; the number of hours per adult volunteer has been on the decline since a high in 2009. The pattern has been similar for teen volunteers.

Interview participants cited the library website as a major source of information about the library and two mentioned checking the library's hours on the website.

We discussed three participants' experiences volunteering elsewhere, which will be described below.

In summary, activities related to learning about the library are mixed. Regular library users know where to find us and know our hours, so have little need to check the website. High school students have a long history of staffing registration desks during our summer reading program and some continue to need to fulfill service hours requirements, leading to steady rates of volunteering. The adults in our community may be less available with increased demands on their time.

Library services

In the second section of the survey, respondents were asked to review a list of 42 services and to identify first those they had heard of, then those they had used and finally, of those they had not used, to identify those they were interested in trying. One service—*borrow books from libraries outside our system from across the country*—has been excluded from this analysis. This response option was meant to describe Interlibrary Loan, but based on the responses, many people likely misinterpreted the option as describing any borrowing within our consortium.

Awareness

On average, 28% of survey respondents reported that they had heard of any given service. Four services—*meeting / study rooms, homework help, after-hours pick up lockers* and *drive-through window*—have been heard of by more than half of the respondents; 20 services were heard of by one-quarter or more of respondents.

We see greater awareness of certain services based on library location. For instance, 81% of those who listed Northwest as their preferred library had heard of the *drive-through window*, compared with 32% of Old Worthington and 39% of Worthington Park respondents. Similarly, 84% of those who listed Worthington Park as their preferred library were aware of the *after-hours pick up lockers*, compared with 66% of Old Worthington and 53% of Northwest respondents.

Table 33. Awareness of library materials and services

Material or service	▼ Heard of
Meeting / study rooms	74%
Homework help	65%
After-hours pick up lockers	63%
Drive-through window	51%
Get help by telephone	47%
Adventure Kits (themed activity kits for families and adults)	47%
Email newsletter	46%
Binge Boxes (themed movie sets)	45%
Mobile app for smartphone or tablet	42%
Online program / event registration	40%
Newsletter mailed to home	39%
Book vending machines in local community centers	36%
Library social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	35%
Foreign language materials	32%
Tax help	32%
Headphones (for in-library use)	31%
Discovery Kits / Power Packs (themed educational kits for children)	30%
Materials and services for persons with disabilities	30%
Resume and job search help	30%
LimeBike bike share	27%
Get help by chat (24/7 x 365)	24%
Mobile hotspots	24%
Notary public service	22%
Personalized book recommendations	22%
Launchpad tablets (themed games and puzzles for children)	21%
Passport photos & application service	21%
Wireless printing	20%
Educator Card	19%
Teacher collections	19%
Get help by text message	18%
Browsing baskets	16%
Device chargers (for in-library use)	15%
Light therapy lamps	13%
Appointments for in-depth assistance from librarians	13%
Auto code readers	8%
GoChip Beams (wireless hotspot for streaming movies and TV shows)	8%
Car jump starters	7%
Vox Books (read-along picture books for children)	6%
Energy Check Toolkit	6%
Air quality monitors	5%
Voice assistant for library programs / events (Alexa Skill, Google Action)	4%

There are also differences in awareness by gender. Across the board, women were more likely to have heard of nearly all services than men, with the greatest differences when it comes to *homework help* (70% of women had heard of, compared with 49% of men), *online program / event*

registration (44% women and 27% men) and *newsletter mailed to home* (42% women and 28% men).

Those under 18 and those aged 25-44 were more likely to have heard of services aimed at families, such as *Discovery Kits / Power Packs* and *Launchpad tablets*. Those under 18 were also more likely to have heard of items available for in-library use, including *headphones* and *device chargers*. These findings are in keeping with what we learned in our 2016 T&I survey which found that those under 18 undertake in-person services—such as charging devices or making purchases from vending machines—at a higher rate than older respondents.

Generally, though, respondents to the survey tended to be unaware of the non-traditional materials and services, such as *light therapy lamps*, *auto code readers* and *air quality monitors*, as well as the more specialized technology services, such as *wireless printing* and *voice assistants*.

In our interviews, although our questions didn't specifically probe on the services from these lists, participants occasionally brought them up, indicating at least basic awareness. More than two-thirds of the interview participants (22) mentioned one of 26 items on this list. Nearly half (9) named just one, just as many (9) mentioned two or three and four mentioned six or more. One person [#11-F/35-44/OWL] named a total of nine items on this list!

Table 34. Mentions of library materials and services

Material or service	Participants mentioning
Adventure Kits / Discovery Kits / Power Packs	8
Mobile app for smartphone or tablet	7
After-hours pick up lockers	4
Drive-through window	4
Homework help	4
Light therapy lamps	4
Meeting / study rooms	4
Mobile hotspots	4
Air quality monitors	3
Notary public service	3
Personalized book recommendations	3
Car jump starters	2
Get help by chat (24/7 x 365)	2
Launchpad tablets (themed games and puzzles for children)	2
Appointments for in-depth assistance from librarians	1
Auto code readers	1
Binge Boxes (themed movie sets)	1
Book vending machines in local community centers	1
Device chargers (for in-library use)	1
Educator Card	1
Energy Check Toolkit	1
Headphones (for in-library use)	1
Passport photos & application service	1
Resume and job search help	1
Tax help	1
Teacher collections	1

Many of the items mentioned by the most interview participants—*after-hours pick up lockers, drive-through window, homework help*—were also top among survey respondents.

We also asked them to recall a time when they noticed something new at the library, or were surprised by something. Nearly two-thirds (18) acknowledged a time they had noticed something new. Five remarked on the availability of non-traditional materials. Five remarked on the discontinuation of our *mobile app*, which had just recently been announced. Just one person mentioned in-person materials, including *headphones* and *device chargers*.

More than one-third (12) said they had not noticed anything new, often remarking that their library use is routinized.

I don't notice anything new. I'm usually on a mission for something. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

I don't recall noticing anything particularly new... Probably it's been something and I probably internalized it and now, as far as I'm concerned, it's just always been there. [#01-M/65+/OWL]

You wouldn't want me to be a witness at a crime either... Things can be new and I don't realize it. [#07-F/55-64/NWL]

Nearly one-third of participants (8) never mentioned any materials or services from this list.

More generally, we asked interview participants how they become aware of what's new at the library. All but two of the 30 participants identified specific channels for learning what's new, with 18 participants identifying more than one channel. Top among them were our main marketing venues: the website (13), library signage (11), PageTurner print newsletter (10) and e-newsletter (9).

I do go to the website and kind of check and kind of pay attention when I'm doing something as simple as reserving a book. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

I hear about most of that stuff from the website homepage, that is where I go. I feel like I visit the website at least two or three times a week. So, if there is something on the page, that is where I would typically find it from. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

The library has great promotions, that kind of thing. When you walk in, you'll see signs that advertise new things. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

The mailer that comes to our home is a big deal. I wouldn't know about most things without the mailer. You can look at it on your own time. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

The email is really helpful... You might get one every couple of weeks and it's fun to read and see what's going on. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

In addition, three people mentioned fliers, two people mentioned library staff and one each mentioned friends, library displays, the wireless network authentication screen, *ThisWeek Worthington* newspaper column and Facebook.

In summary, people monitor library communication channels, but lack awareness of the full range of materials and services the library has to offer. More people are aware of long-standing library services and fewer are aware of non-traditional services and specialized technology services.

Interest

On average, 17% of people who had not already used a given service reported interest in trying it. No single service was of interest to half of the respondents.

The top three services, of interest to at least one-third of respondents, are all convenience services: *after-hours pick up lockers* were of interest to the most people (40%), followed closely by *passport photo and application* (39%) and *notary public services* (37%).

Table 35. Interest in library materials and services

Material or service	▼ Not used, interested in trying
After-hours pick up lockers	40%
Passport photos & application service	39%
Notary public service	37%
Personalized book recommendations	31%
Light therapy lamps	28%
Binge Boxes (themed movie sets)	27%
Drive-through window	25%
Adventure Kits (themed activity kits for families and adults)	25%
Air quality monitors	22%
Online program / event registration	20%
Device chargers (for in-library use)	20%
Email newsletter	19%
Energy Check Toolkit	19%
Book vending machines in local community centers	18%
Mobile app for smartphone or tablet	18%
Wireless printing	18%
Foreign language materials	17%
GoChip Beams (wireless hotspot for streaming movies and TV shows)	17%
Discovery Kits / Power Packs (themed educational kits for children)	15%
Browsing baskets	15%
LimeBike bike share	15%
Mobile hotspots	15%
Meeting / study rooms	14%
Get help by text message	14%
Get help by chat (24/7 x 365)	14%
Resume and job search help	14%
Tax help	12%
Appointments for in-depth assistance from librarians	12%
Auto code readers	11%
Vox Books (read-along picture books for children)	10%
Library social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	10%
Car jump starters	10%
Newsletter mailed to home	8%
Launchpad tablets (themed games and puzzles for children)	8%
Educator Card	8%
Headphones (for in-library use)	8%
Teacher collections	7%
Homework help	6%
Get help by telephone	6%
Voice assistant for library programs / events (Alexa Skill, Google Action)	6%
Materials and services for persons with disabilities	4%

Although we saw above that people did not report looking for book recommendations at the library in high numbers, nearly a third (31%) are nevertheless interested in *personalized book recommendations*. When asked to envision what the library could offer that would make their lives better, two interview participants discussed passive personalized recommendations.

If there was a way the library could just know what I wanted to read next and just tell me. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

Recommendations for items... but not in email form because I just delete them. Maybe when searching the catalog or when I come and pick things up. Recommendations based on my searches—if I was handed a personalized flier every month... I'd want the options presented in gentle way. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

Several non-traditional circulating items were of interest to around a quarter of respondents, including *light therapy lamps* (28%), *Binge Boxes* (27%) and *Adventure Kits* (25%).

Interest levels showed the starkest differences by age. Younger people had higher levels of interest on average, with 18-24-year-olds showing the highest levels of interest. Half or more of 18-24-year-olds were interested in trying five services: *personalized book recommendations* (66%), *Binge Boxes* (58%), *after-hours pick up lockers* (55%), *drive-through window* (52%) and *resume and job search help* (50%). Those under 25 were also more interested in *meeting and study rooms* than other groups.

Lowest interest services include many targeted at specific audiences: persons with disabilities, educators (e.g., *teacher collections*) and students (e.g., *homework help*) and families with young children (e.g., *Launchpad tablets*).

The remaining low-interest services include specialized technology services like *voice assistants*, non-traditional circulating items like *car jump starters* and *auto code readers* and reference services like *get help by text message*, *get help by chat*, *resume and job search help*, *tax help*, *appointments for in-depth assistance from librarians* and *get help by telephone*.

In our interviews, we asked participants if they always do the same things or if they try new things. Of the 28 participants who answered, two-thirds (19) said they always did the same things.

It's mostly the same stuff. It's almost a routine of sorts; you come in, I may check the little pop-up bookstore in the front. Is there anything new there? And I may go and greet the people at the front desk, if I have anything to drop off, [then I] drop off, and check the Get Lucky section... For the most part it's down to a routine. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

The remaining third (9) expressed more openness to trying new things, but noted that there are limits to doing so.

I try to do new things, but sometimes I get into a rut. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

I know what I want to do and then I go do it. But when I have extra moments, usually when I'm here and not distracted, I'll explore. I'll look around more once I have mental headspace, but it doesn't happen that often. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

As noted above, we also asked participants to identify anything surprising or new they noticed at the library and followed up with questions about how they felt about what they discovered. Of the

18 who had noticed something surprising or new, 11 responded positively, using words like “neat,” “cool,” “awesome,” “amazed” and “excited.” Four people were particularly enthusiastic about new services and materials.

I love it when there’s a new toy, like a new gadget or device.. The library is on a pedestal in our house. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Things are always a little bit different which makes it so much fun to come in and walk around. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

Three people mentioned that learning about new materials and services expanded their perception of libraries. One singled out non-traditional materials.

When you think of the library, it’s kind of off the wall. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

The remaining seven people were neutral about the changes they noticed, including four who responded to the discontinuation of the app.

I noticed they closed the app recently. I found myself looking at the website differently when getting used to the mobile website... I probably should have used the website all along. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

I don’t like change, so I was hesitant at first... But it was really easy to do... It was really a little bit of angst over nothing. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

In summary, while some may be predisposed to seek out new services, most people stick to familiar routines. Services that offer convenience and facilitate borrowing have the highest appeal, along with kits that offer engaging experiences. Specialized technology services, reference services and most non-traditional circulating materials are of little interest.

Use

On average, just 9% of people reported using any given service. Three-quarters of people have used five or fewer services; 10% have used none.

The most-used services tend to be the more established, traditional services, including the *drive-through window, email and print newsletters and meeting / study rooms.*

Table 36. Use of library materials and services

Material or service	▼ Used
Drive-through window	33%
Email newsletter	29%
Newsletter mailed to home	28%
Meeting / study rooms	27%
Mobile app for smartphone or tablet	26%
Get help by telephone	20%
Library social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	19%
Online program / event registration	17%
After-hours pick up lockers	12%
Book vending machines in local community centers	11%
Foreign language materials	9%
Launchpad tablets (themed games and puzzles for children)	9%
Headphones (for in-library use)	8%
Get help by chat (24/7 x 365)	8%
Discovery Kits / Power Packs (themed educational kits for children)	8%
Personalized book recommendations	7%
Adventure Kits (themed activity kits for families and adults)	7%
Mobile hotspots	7%
Wireless printing	7%
Educator Card	6%
Binge Boxes (themed movie sets)	6%
Notary public service	5%
Browsing baskets	5%
Teacher collections	4%
Get help by text message	4%
Homework help	4%
Tax help	4%
Resume and job search help	3%
Passport photos & application service	3%
Device chargers (for in-library use)	2%
Auto code readers	2%
Materials and services for persons with disabilities	2%
Light therapy lamps	1%
Appointments for in-depth assistance from librarians	1%
Vox Books (read-along picture books for children)	1%
LimeBike bike share	1%
Energy Check Toolkit	1%
GoChip Beams (wireless hotspot for streaming movies and TV shows)	1%
Air quality monitors	0%
Car jump starters	0%
Voice assistant for library programs / events (Alexa Skill, Google Action)	0%

We see greater use of certain services based on library location. As we saw above with awareness of the *drive-through window*, 60% of those who listed Northwest as their preferred library had used

the *drive-through window*, compared with just 14% of Old Worthington and 19% of Worthington Park users.

There are also differences in use by gender, though not as stark as when it comes to awareness. More women than men reported using the *drive-through window* (35% to 27%), *print newsletter* (31% to 20%) and *online program registration* (19% to 12%).

As above, those aged 35-44 were more likely to have used services aimed at families, especially *Launchpad tablets* and *Discovery Kits / Power Packs*. Those under 18 were also more likely to have used items available for in-library use, including *headphones* and *device chargers*. Those under 25 were more likely to have used *meeting and study rooms*. Those over 65 were more likely to have used *telephone reference*.

Among the least used services are the non-traditional circulating materials, such as *auto code readers*, *light therapy lamps*, *Vox Books*, *Energy Check Toolkit*, *GoChip Beams*, *air quality monitors* and *car jump starters* and specialized reference services, such as *get help by text message*, *tax help*, *resume and job search help* and *appointments for in-depth assistance from librarians*.

In the sequence of interview questions that asked participants about whether they encountered anything new or surprising, we concluded with a question about whether they felt what they learned would change the way they use the library. As noted above, more than two-thirds (22) of the participants were aware of some of our more novel materials and services and half of those (11) expressed positive feelings about them. During the course of the interview, just seven acknowledged using—or having plans to use—materials and services on this list.

We use the drive-through pick up at Northwest. It's a great feature! Awesome feature! ... I've used the notary service a couple of times and have also sent other people to the library for a notary... The Wi-Fi hotspots are really exciting—I'm anxious to use it. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

I've occasionally used the night pickup [lockers], which is really handy... I did have a document notarized a few months ago. That was handy. [#01-M/65+/OWL]

I borrowed an adventure kit to use with my grandkids. [#03-F/55-64/OWL]

Notably, the items they mentioned include convenience services, like *notary public service*, *pick up lockers* and *drive-through window*, as well as items for families and children.

As noted above, most participants only mentioned three or fewer services, while one participant mentioned nine different materials and services during the course of the interview.

We love getting the [wireless hotspot] for traveling... My kids love [the activity kits]... My daughter has an iPad and my son has a phone, but they love the [Launchpad] tablets... They have the library vending machine at rec center—we love it when it works. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Generally, though, participants' experience with these items did not extend further than awareness or interest.

I know that lockers are available, but they require planning ahead. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

I have a teacher card. I have not utilized teacher collections. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

I feel like we should have utilized the homework help a lot more with my kids, but I didn't inquire about it to understand what it was really about. [#23-F/45-54/NWL]

Going further, some acknowledged that their awareness of new materials and services would not change the way they use the library.

Seeing new services has not affected the way I use the library, they're not services I need. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

Ultimately, the novel materials and services we offer pique curiosity and generate goodwill, but do not necessarily translate into use. Rather than being perceived as *personally* useful, our more novel materials and services may instead send a message about who we are.

Sometimes people think just things that are resources just like movies, books, video games, but the library, because of these resources, it shows that you really care about the community... It's about the things that are really useful and accessible to the community. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

The library feels more welcoming and it breaks the conventional stereotypes of learning. There are other ways to learn and other people to interact with. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

I feel good to see all the services. Seeing all the people waiting outside to come into the library—I don't normally think about all the different people that use the library. You just see the group you are in. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

These results hearken back to the 2009 services and programs survey when we asked people to rate the importance of services personally and to the community—across the board respondents rated services and programs more highly at the community level. Scores were twice as high for programs at the community level than at the personal level and about 40% higher for services and materials.

In summary, use of novel materials and services is low. More traditional services are the most used, alongside our communication channels. Although people acknowledge that they don't use these novel services, they believe that they have value for others in the community and their availability reflects well on the library.

The library in the community

If we look at the activities described above in pairs, we can see how the library measures up against similar activities elsewhere in the community. Looking more closely at the percent of respondents who reported undertaking activities at the library against those who reported activities elsewhere in the community and calculating the difference, we can see which activities people tend to prefer doing at the library and which activities people prefer to do elsewhere.

Table 37. Comparison of activities at the library and elsewhere

Core service area	Activity	Respondents undertaking activity in the last year		
		At the Library	Elsewhere	▼ Difference
Borrowing	Checked out items	97%	25%	73%
Technology	Used computers	53%	4%	49%
Borrowing	Picked up items	94%	65%	29%
Borrowing	Browsed in person	93%	81%	12%
Borrowing	Browsed online	95%	87%	8%
Account management	Managed account	90%	85%	5%
Facility use	Stayed 30 minutes	87%	88%	0%
Office services	Used copier / printer / fax / scanner	33%	41%	-8%
Research and recommendations	Sought reading recommendations	71%	86%	-15%
Research and recommendations	Asked question in-person	76%	91%	-15%
Background information	Planned a visit	82%	98%	-15%
Children's services	Brought children	41%	56%	-15%
Programs and events	Searched for programs	75%	96%	-21%
Digital and online services	Used subscription resource	49%	70%	-21%
Digital and online services	Downloaded media	52%	76%	-24%
Research and recommendations	Asked question online	24%	50%	-26%
Programs and events	Attended program	50%	78%	-29%
Technology	Used wireless	50%	79%	-29%
Research and recommendations	Researched a topic	68%	99%	-31%
Background information	Volunteered	7%	65%	-58%

We will look more closely at the core service areas in turn.

Borrowing

Far and away, people prefer the library for borrowing activities. As we learned above, the range of borrowing activities is nearly universal. All respondents reported checking out library items at some point, but less than half (44%) have rented items from Redbox. Vastly more people report checking out items from the library in the last month (90%) than renting from Redbox (11%).

Table 38. Comparison of borrowing activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Checked out items	90%	97%	100%	11%	25%	44%
Browsed online	87%	95%	98%	63%	87%	93%
Picked up items	81%	94%	98%	31%	65%	76%
Browsed in person	73%	93%	99%	47%	81%	95%

People also report browsing the shelves at the library and searching the catalog at higher rates than shopping in person and online, overall. More people report browsing at the library in the last month (87% online and 73% in person) than shopping elsewhere (63% online and 47% in person). Likewise, while many stores have begun offering online reservation and pick up of items in recent years, people are using the library's service far more regularly than any commercial service: more than three-quarters of respondents (81%) have picked up reserved items at the library in the last month, compared with less than one-third (31%) who have purchased an item for in-store pickup.

In our interviews, after asking participants to reflect on a recent time they had completed a specific activity, we asked them contrast their experiences completing their activity at the library and elsewhere in the community. We spoke to 13 participants about their borrowing activities at the library and elsewhere, including checking out items and browsing online and in person. The experience of borrowing at the library was most often contrasted with the experience at bookstores, such as Barnes & Noble and Amazon, as well as Netflix.

The top reason people prefer the library to bookstores is cost, mentioned by nine participants.

I enjoy the aesthetic of bookstores, but I don't enjoy the out-of-pocket expense. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

I wait to get bestseller books from the library over buying the books myself. Things at the library are free, why spend money on Amazon? ... I checked out 30 books, if I bought those from Barnes & Noble or Amazon that would be so expensive. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

I don't buy books on Amazon—the library has everything I could want. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

At a bookstore I would be so paranoid. Because if [if my son] rips a book—you know, "If you break it, you bought it." And books are not inexpensive. [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

I could've gone to a bookstore—and I wasn't going to do that, because I wasn't in the market to buy any books. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

Four participants felt the selection at bookstores was not as extensive as at the library.

I appreciate that the info at the library is current. There's a decent representation of what is out there. I can certainly find way better stuff at the library than at Barnes & Noble. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

It's hard to find older books at bookstores. They usually only have what's new. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

I can go to places, especially Half Price Books where books are cheaper, but you might not get exactly what you want. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

I have more trust that the library will have items than, say, Barnes & Noble. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

Three participants also complained about the organization—or lack thereof—at bookstores when compared to the library.

It's the worst, no offense to bookstores. But it's never organized by author, it's never in a good or convenient way, if you don't know what genre something is, you don't know where it's going to be... I can't find anything. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

[Browsing in a bookstore] would require a lot more looking and searching because bookstores are not as big about putting authors in order. Last time I was in a bookstore I couldn't find something and I asked someone and they said, "Oh, it's over here." Even though the name's here, the book was over there. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

Store websites can be confusing and cumbersome. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

Two participants cited the personal attention of dealing with library staff as a benefit over bookstores.

[At Amazon], you're lonely—no one is there to answer questions for you. [#08-F/55-64/OWL]

[Compared with Barnes & Noble], I just think the people in the library, because it's more localized to your area—the people that work here are more concerned and care about the patrons and doing the best job. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

Two participants described starting at a bookstore website to discover books before turning to the library to borrow.

Amazon is not a place I've bought books, but sometimes I will look at books on Amazon. I look at reviews, and what else are people reading. I discover books on Amazon then look for them at the library. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

I usually start on Amazon to see release dates and what is out there. Then you pull back and look at the library... It's like going to the dictionary, [Amazon is] just what pops up. When you Google it, that's what shows up. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

Three participants identified aspects of Amazon and Netflix they preferred to the library.

I wanted to find the latest and greatest on Amazon... I think one of things I ran up against when I was trying to get the latest and greatest [at the library] was the reserve list. I wanted to read the latest and greatest now, not wait. [#08-F/55-64/OWL]

I love getting stuff in the mail. There's more joy in buying something. I buy tons of stuff off of Amazon—this is what I want, I order it, and it's at my door two days later. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]

Netflix does give recommendations. With the library, it would be cool to get recommendations for another media. Books and movies similar to what you just checked out—a similar genre that I wouldn't have found on my own. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

In summary, people strongly prefer the experience of borrowing from the library to other alternatives. Cost, selection, organization and personal attention are key factors influencing people's preferences. Nevertheless, people do use bookstores and streaming media services in conjunction with the library and appreciate some features available elsewhere.

Technology

While less universal than borrowing, people also strongly prefer the library for using computers. As noted above, three-quarters of survey respondents have used computers at the library, compared with just 13% who have rented a computer elsewhere; about one-third (32%) have used a library computer in the last month and just 2% have rented a computer that recently.

Table 39. Comparison of technology activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Computers	32%	53%	75%	2%	4%	13%
Wireless	34%	50%	63%	63%	79%	86%

In contrast, wireless use is much higher outside the library. The vast majority of respondents (86%) reported connecting to wireless outside the library, with more than three-quarters (79%) doing so in the last year. Nearly twice as many people report connecting to a wireless network at a store, coffee shop or other location in the last month as at the library (63% versus 34%).

We talked to two interview participants about their experiences using computers at the library and elsewhere in the community. When asked what alternatives they considered, both contrasted their experience at the library with a copy shop, such as FedEx Office. As noted above, cost was a major factor why people use the library instead of a copy shop, along with convenience.

But say, if I went to one of the print shops, I would have to pay to use the computer, even if I'm just pulling up something to print. So, then, the resources are freer, and the copies are low-cost.. It would've been more inconvenient. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

The alternatives would be FedEx Kinko's, but those are much more expensive than the library. And the library is a more convenient location. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

While interview participants occasionally brought up using the library wireless, they did not discuss connecting to wireless anywhere other than the library.

In summary, free use—or borrowing—of a computer at the library is distinctive within the community.

Account management

Account management is more mixed. More people report managing their library account than using another online account to pay bills (such as bank, credit card, utility)—94% ever at the library compared with 87% elsewhere and 90% in the last year at the library compared with 85% elsewhere. In contrast, more people (81%) reported managing other online accounts in the last month than library accounts (71%).

Table 40. Comparison of account activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Account management	71%	90%	94%	81%	85%	87%

As noted above, interview participants did not often discuss managing their library accounts and never discussed account management elsewhere than the library. They did mention services such as automatic renewals and discontinuation of fines, which may require less frequent account management than required by financial services.

Facility use

Spending time on premises tracks almost perfectly between the library and the community. The percentage of people who reported spending more than 30 minutes at the library is virtually identical to those who spent more than 30 minutes at a book store, coffee shop, mall, co-working space or other business and they report undertaking these activities along the same timeframes.

Table 41. Comparison of facility activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Stayed 30 minutes	62%	87%	97%	60%	88%	96%

This activity does reflect some differences by age group. The vast majority of those aged 18-24 (85%) reported spending time at a location other than the library in the last month, far more than any other age group. However, a smaller portion of those 18-24-year-olds (58%) reported spending time at the library in the last month.

Table 42. Comparison of facility activities at the library and elsewhere, by age

Stayed 30 minutes ▲ Age	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
under 18	70%	89%	95%	68%	92%	92%
18-24	58%	94%	97%	85%	100%	100%
25-34	65%	90%	96%	58%	87%	97%
35-44	72%	94%	98%	64%	90%	98%
45-54	56%	85%	98%	65%	89%	98%
55-64	58%	84%	97%	56%	87%	95%
65+	61%	85%	95%	55%	85%	93%

We talked to five participants about their experiences spending time at the library or elsewhere in the community.

As noted above, three participants discussed choosing to spend time at the library so they can focus or avoid distractions, appreciating the library's peaceful atmosphere. Two of these participants felt a coffee shop doesn't offer the same ambiance.

I haven't spent that much time in Starbucks trying to read or write. Starbucks has usually been a get-in, get-out experience for me. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

I definitely wouldn't do this at Starbucks. Starbucks is a little bit louder, especially during the rush hour. People getting the coffees, the espresso machines are making their noise. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

However, in contrast, one participant welcomed the more dynamic energy at the coffee shop.

The business of the coffee shop does something for me—stops me from getting lost in my own head or feel distracted by the quietness somehow. And to some extent, it's got more community for me... I see the same people... [There's] a lot more hustle and bustle in the coffee shop, and interactions with other people. [#16-M/25-34/Other]

Two participants felt the library was more reliable when it comes to finding space.

It's kind of more cramped there [at the coffee shop] than at the library. At the library, you can almost bank on there being an open spot somewhere. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

You've got to be able to count on there being a place to sit for a few hours, got to have a plug, Wi-Fi has to be reliable... [At some coffee shops] it's dicier. The library always has that place to sit. [#16-M/25-34/Other]

One participant felt the library was a safer place to spend time than a coffee shop.

I feel safer in the library. In a coffee shop, I would feel not as ok to leave my laptop unattended. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

This participant went on to say she felt freer at the library to spread out and linger.

I feel like I would feel “in the way” at a coffee shop. Part of that’s my anxiety, but also part of it is the library feels like the place where you are allowed, for lack of a better word, to get out your books and make a big mess... At a coffee shop I feel like I’d be in the way. That’s not the main purpose of a coffee shop, they want you to hang out to some extent, but they don’t want you to get out 17,000 books. They kind of frown on that. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

One participant felt ultimately there was no competition when it comes to using the library space.

I mean, honestly, [it’s] either library or bust for me. Starbucks is loud; the library is quiet. If I’m not home, it’s the library. There is no other option. Those are the only two options I present to myself, especially if I’m doing work or anything. It’s either library or go home. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

Another participant thought that libraries and coffee shops have much in common, but his preference for coffee shops comes down to convenience.

[Libraries and the coffee shop experience have] gotten closer together. Northside even has a coffee shop. For me, there are three or four coffee shops within 200 yards, and there are zero libraries. If there was an extra library, that would be a lot more attractive... A big part of why I like living where I live is that it’s walkable. It’s 10 blocks to the library, but two blocks to the coffee shop. [#16-M/25-34/Other]

The last participant talked about his experience suit shopping. He described going to the store without anything particular in mind. He praised the personal attention he received and felt the staff were helpful and accommodating. He likened his positive experience shopping to the experience at the library.

Same qualities at library! I like to keep things simple and I like things to work in same way. If you can predict what is going to happen, there are fewer variables and fewer frustrations in your life. The library is a system I have plugged into. It’s readily available. I’m just as loyal to the library as I am to Amazon and [Jos. A.] Bank’s. They all meet my expectations and make my life easier. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]

In summary, people can count on the library for space to work. The library is a safe place to spend time without pressure to move along. Many find the library’s peaceful ambiance conducive to focusing.

Office services

More people have visited a copy shop to make copies or print photos or documents than used copier, printer, scanner and / or fax machine at the library (84% to 62%), though slightly more have done so in the last month at the library (16%) compared with elsewhere (13%).

Table 43. Comparison of office services activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Copier / printer / fax / scanner	16%	33%	61%	13%	41%	84%

While we did not discuss office services with any interview participants, as noted above, the two participants who discussed using computers at the library did so primarily for printing. As described above, people considered the library to be a lower cost, more convenient alternative to a copy shop.

Research and recommendations

The library does not compare favorably when it comes to activities we often think of as core library services, such as research, reference and reader’s advisory. Virtually every respondent (99%) reported searching online for a topic of interest, with nearly all of them (97%) doing so in the last month. While the vast majority (88%) have researched a topic at the library, less than half (42%) have done so in the last month.

Table 44. Comparison of research and recommendation activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
In-person reference	40%	76%	91%	75%	91%	93%
Reading recommendations	46%	71%	78%	69%	86%	89%
Researched a topic	42%	68%	88%	97%	99%	99%
Online reference	7%	24%	41%	31%	50%	59%

Likewise, people have more recently turned elsewhere than the library when looking for answers, both in person and online—in the last month, three-quarters of respondents talked to family, friends or neighbors to get information or recommendations compared with just 40% who talked to a librarian or library staff member to get information or recommendations and about one-third of respondents posted a question or asked for advice online compared with just 7% who emailed the library to ask a question or get help.

Lastly, despite people’s predilection for borrowing materials from the library, they are not necessarily turning to the library for recommendations on *what* to borrow. More than two-thirds (69%) have looked online for reading recommendations in the last month compared with less than half (46%) who’ve used the library website.

In our interviews, we spoke to 11 participants about their experiences with research and recommendations at the library and elsewhere. When asked about alternatives they considered along the way, all participants identified sources they consult in addition to the library, some with quite extensive lists.

I subscribe to magazines, and book reviews and stuff like that... Talking to friends... is usually a good way to find new things. I don't know the answer for how I pick a particular book, because it's usually a combination of different things: multiple people talked about it, or a movie's going to be made out of this book... so, stuff like that. It's a wide variety of stuff that contributes to what I read. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

I like to look at the New York Times Best Sellers List. I also talk to different people at church and other places. I will get recommendations from them. I also listen to the news and what books they talk about... When I'm in the airport I will go and browse and see what I can buy. I also go to browse at Barnes & Noble in person and online to browse. I also look for the latest Caldecott awards and different awards lists... Let's see, of course friends, and magazines. I follow and get emails from my favorite authors when they have new books coming out. [#08-F/55-64/OWL]

Goodreads—it's a fun place to browse, get information about books, see what other people think about them and get ideas for what I might like to read. I do use Amazon, reading reviews about what people didn't like... Reading negative reviews helps a great deal. I get two to three emails every day from BookBub and Kindle Buffet. [#03-F/55-64/OWL]

Well, I'm part of a couple Facebook groups and they recommended some books. [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

Of the eight interview participants we talked to about seeking reading recommendations, six did so elsewhere than the library. Although they were open to consulting the library, two participants said they were satisfied with the recommendations they got elsewhere.

I thought about [talking to library staff], but I never run out of things to read. I wouldn't shy away though. [#03-F/55-64/OWL]

At that time, [I didn't consider going to the library]. I got so many good responses immediately that I didn't need to go anywhere else. The next time I need a list of books, I will—I will!—come back to the librarians and see what's up. [#01-M/65+/OWL]

Trust was a major reason two participants preferred recommendations from family and friends over the library.

I respect their opinion, but I'm not calling the library. I would never do that... The library is a great place to find things, but not necessarily to ask for their opinion... I would value [the recommendations from library staff], they know what they are doing. There's a different trust level... I trust family and friends more... I'm comfortable with them. I value their opinions. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

I'm a member of an online group that consists of editors... It's a group I've been associated with 20 years, maybe more... I trust their judgment... They know me, I know them and so we have a lot of history together and the ability for them to come up with some suggestions, most of which were pretty good matches! [#01-M/65+/OWL]

As noted above, the two participants who preferred the library cited authority and variety as their motivation.

We talked to two participants about their experiences researching a topic elsewhere than the library. One was researching an academic issue and found our resources lacking for her narrow topic.

I primarily teach voice and I have a student who is going through transition, transgender, and so I was doing research on if there were any articles or any books available. There isn't much, but there are some things... Because I didn't find anything terribly helpful, I ended up getting a book requested through Capital [University] and their library. [#24-F/55-64/OWL]

The other was researching household issues and did not consider the library at all.

I bought a mattress a year ago, so I got a temporary subscription to Consumer Reports. When I was trying to fix my dryer, I went to YouTube. I was doing the best I can on the wild web. I don't think I would've thought about coming to the library for that. [#16-M/25-34/Other]

We talked to just one interview participant about his experience with in-person reference and he cited the helpfulness of library staff.

It's nice that with the library you can ask really about anything—whereas in other stores, you might ask someone and they say, "Oh that's a pain, I work in another department and I don't know anything about that." So that's a nice thing about the library. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

This participant also cited cost as a reason to use the library.

The library is nice—if you don't want to use it anymore, you don't use it. It's free, not like the gym where you get dinged every month whether you don't use it. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

In summary, people are surrounded with information in their lives and the library is just one resource among many. While people recognize that the library offers authoritative information, they turn first to their trusted personal networks. People believe that the library is not well suited for all of their information needs.

Background information

Nearly all respondents (98%) reported that they searched online to plan a visit to a store, business or other location (such as check hours, look up address) in the last year and nearly as many (94%) in the last month. More than three-quarters (82%) reported planning a visit to the library (such as check hours, look up address) in the last year and less than two-thirds (59%) in the last month.

Table 45. Comparison of background information activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Planned a visit	59%	82%	91%	94%	98%	98%
Volunteered	3%	7%	18%	38%	65%	88%

Just two participants mentioned using the library website to plan a visit, but no-one mentioned planning a visit on another website.

We spoke to three interview participants about their experiences volunteering elsewhere in the community. All three participants talked about volunteering as a way to get out more.

There is a group in Westerville, Arts in Uptown... [I wanted to] get more involved and out of the house. And to get the kids out of the house. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

I'm active in Boy Scouts... I'm outdoorsy and it's a good excuse to be outdoors with my kids. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

Through work... [an] email that comes out regularly with opportunities, last one was Meals on Wheels... [I wanted] to get out, get activity, get exercise. [#12-M/45-54/WPK]

All three described a social aspect to their volunteering.

My wife ... sometimes brings a list home and asks what would you like ... to try to do together? The AIDs walk last year downtown, we did together. [#12-M/45-54/WPK]

Other people I knew were involved. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

It's a good excuse to be outdoors with my kids. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

Two participants described a strong connection to the mission of the organization they volunteer with.

Art is something I've always enjoyed. I'm passionate about art. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

I love the outdoors. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

These two participants were also open to the prospect of volunteering at the library

I would love to volunteer at the library, think it would be fun. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

I would consider volunteering at the library in the future when my kids are older. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

In summary, volunteering provides people with a way to get out and into the community and express their connection to the mission of the organization. Using websites to plan visits may be so ingrained as to be not worth mentioning.

Children's services

Although the library is a destination on par with others in the community, it is less central for families with children. The vast majority of respondents (84%) have taken children to a playground, park, museum, play café or other location, with many (40%) doing so in the last month, compared with about two-thirds (68%) who have brought children to the library, and less than one-third (29%) in the last month.

Table 46. Comparison of children's services activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Brought children	29%	41%	67%	40%	56%	84%

One-third of respondents have never brought children to the library—twice as many as those who have never brought children to other activities in the community (16%).

As noted above, we spoke to seven interview participants about their experiences bringing children to the library. Three participants described a variety of other destinations they chose for their families in addition to the library.

We used to have a COSI pass. I would take them out to COSI up to two or three times a month. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

Sometimes the rec center is a place we'll go. My son is now able to be on the fitness floor. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

We did lots of stuff with them when they were young. We went to many other libraries—the little one in Powell just across the tracks at Smoky Row is an awesome little spot and obviously downtown Columbus has a great main library. We also went to the zoo and Franklin Park [Conservatory] and lots of other types of nature-oriented places... The Community Center too... Yeah, we did all kinds of stuff. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

As noted above, the library's emphasis on literacy and reading is a major draw, lacking at museums and bookstores, according to two participants.

I think it would be different because every place has a different technique. COSI is all about hands-on learning. They're about trying to get you excited about science and doing things. There's no real reading comprehension at the museum. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

We go to the bookstores, but ... to encourage the love of reading, I feel like the library is the best place. It's the atmosphere, not just the books. I like that... [At a bookstore,] they even have that little play area and that stage and they probably read books to the kids at times... I go there to buy a book, I don't go there to teach my kids about books, or the love of reading. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

When compared to museums and bookstores, these participants felt the library is more convenient and offers a personal touch.

I've thought about, like, local museums and other libraries, but truthfully, the Worthington Library ... saves me time. It's a lot closer and I don't have to fight for a parking spot. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

[At a bookstore,] there's not really anybody, you're more on your own to search. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

In summary, families have many options to entertain their children and the library distinguishes itself with our emphasis on literacy and reading, along with our convenience and personal touch.

Programs and events

The library does not seem to be a destination of choice when it comes to programs and events. Nearly all respondents had attended a program or event at a community center, park, museum or other location (91%), with more three-quarters (78%) doing so in the last year and nearly half (47%) in the last month. Virtually all respondents reported searching online for programs, events or activities (97%), with just as many (96%) doing so in the last year and the vast majority (88%) in the last month.

Table 47. Comparison of program and event activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Searched for programs	44%	75%	84%	88%	96%	97%
Attended program	17%	50%	78%	47%	78%	91%

These numbers far exceed the numbers at the library, by nearly 3-to-1 for those attending programs in the last month and 2-to-1 for searching for programs in the last month.

We spoke to five participants about their experiences with programs at the library and elsewhere. Two participants cited the variety of sources for programs and events they use with their families.

They're involved with several reading programs during the summertime. They get excited, because with Barnes & Noble, up until a certain age you can get a free book. Half Price Books, they'll give you \$5 for June and \$5 for July and Bookworm Bucks, so they can buy a book or whatever they want if they read so many minutes that month. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

We went to main library CML last week. We do look at Barnes & Noble, rec center, community events, Worthington Partnership and Worthington City Parks and Rec department. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Compared to the retail environment, these participants felt the library was more personal.

We've been to handful of things at Barnes & Noble but it pivots around wanting us to buy something. It's not as engaging. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Well, when you go to a retailer, all they care about is selling you whatever they're selling you. So you kinda feel like you need to look around and buy stuff. When you're at the library, you feel like the attention's on the kids—it's always friendly and welcoming. [#09-F/25-34/WPK]

Not to mention the cost.

I like Barnes & Noble. We will all get a treat, coffee and cocoa. My son has a gift card and he wants to buy books and I'm like, "Don't waste your money—we've got a great library!" [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

One participant cited the inconvenience of venturing downtown for major events.

[For Jazz & Rib Fest,] parking is always a problem and a hassle. [#12-M/45-54/WPK]

According to two participants, the library offers variety when compared to other options in the community.

What they do here has so many levels and layers. You can go to parks and find keys, take picture with the mascot, get gift cards for each week—it's never just one thing. There are always tentacles to it which is wonderful. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

If something just stands out, like coaster making—that's different. You don't just walk in to Jo-Ann's and it says, "We're making coasters today!" But stuff that stands out, or is a little bit different. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

In summary, people have many options when it comes to programs and events and, more often, go elsewhere than the library. Those who choose the library, do so for reasons of cost, convenience, personal attention and variety.

Digital and online services

The competition is stiff for the library when it comes to digital and online services. Although, as with borrowing, the library is the only *free* option in the community for access to subscription resources and digital media, people strongly favor the resource offerings outside the library, at a rate of 2-to-1. Two-thirds reported that they viewed TV or movies or listened to music via a subscription service or after purchasing online in the last month, compared with about one-third (31%) who downloaded books, audiobooks, movies and / or music via the library in the last month. More than half (55%) used a resource they personally subscribe to in the last month, compared with only about one-quarter (26%) who have used a library subscription resource.

Table 48. Comparison of digital and online activities at the library and elsewhere

Activity	Library			Elsewhere		
	Last month	▼ Last year	Ever	Last month	Last year	Ever
Downloaded media	31%	52%	61%	67%	76%	80%
Subscription resource	26%	49%	64%	55%	70%	78%

In our interviews, we spoke to nine participants about their experiences using digital and online services at the library and elsewhere.

Six participants discussed using streaming media services elsewhere than the library. They accessed a variety of sources, including Netflix (4), Amazon Prime (2) and one each PBS Passport, TED Talks, Pandora and iHeartRadio.

Half of these participants did not consider the library when it comes to streaming media.

I didn't know that was an option. [#24-F/55-64/OWL]

I've never used those before, I usually get the physical DVD. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

Not really, I think of them as two separate venues. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

Two more participants had tried library streaming services, but rejected them. One participant faced technical barriers.

Do you guys have a specific resource for online movies? What's it called again? [Prompted with Kanopy.] Yes, I did. When it first became available I did check it out, but it didn't seem like anything was really captioned so I haven't gone back to see if that has really changed or not. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

At some point I had the Overdrive app on my phone and maybe my iPad, but I think I used it once. I never really embraced it. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

My iPad is older, I can't download due to low memory. I'm not using library services due to technical barriers. [#28-F/45-54/OWL]

The two participants who used library e-books commented on the availability of assistance from library staff.

I have other sources, but I would use the library... A librarian at Northwest Library did help me get that whole thing set up, so that was great. [#07-F/55-64/NWL]

The last participant used library subscription resources to access newspaper articles and appreciated not needing to go to newspaper websites separately.

In summary, many people are not aware of the digital and online services available through the library. However, many prefer the content available through commercial services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

The library in people's lives

During the course of our interviews, participants shared the many ways the library is part of their lives. Questions asked them to consider the role of the library in their social lives and upcoming life changes, as well as how the library might make their lives better.

Social life

When asked whether they typically come to the library by themselves or with others, 25 of the 29 participants who answered the question said they come alone, at least on occasion. Of these, 15—10 men and five women—said they strictly come alone.

It's almost like a place to get away. I work in brokerage, so there's always someone saying something, and it's nice to be quiet and by yourself for a little bit. [#15-M/35-44/WPK]

The remaining 10 participants—nine women and one man—said they sometimes come alone and sometimes come with children. Only two participants mentioned coming with any other companion—in both cases, women mentioning husbands.

Finally, four participants—all women between the ages 25-54—said they always come with children.

We also asked participants if they ever spoke to other patrons when at the library. Nearly half (13) said no outright, often acknowledging that they wish to keep to themselves and / or respect others' wishes for privacy.

I personally feel like when I'm at the library, I'd rather keep my head down and I feel that most people are here for that. [#26-M/25-34/OWL]

I think the library is one of those places where people are doing their own work kind of thing. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

I don't like disturbing people that are reading or involved with something. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

A few more (4) mentioned talking to people they are already acquainted with.

I rarely come here without seeing someone I know. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Many more (8) referred to exchanging only social niceties.

Folks usually come in for a reason to come and borrow books or something like that. I would say that people seem friendly. We might acknowledge each other and wave, but not extended conversation. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

Just six participants acknowledged interacting with other patrons previously unknown to them. Three each talked about chatting with other library patrons at programs or with other parents while at the library with children.

At programs, I'll talk with other patrons there. I work from home so any extra social integration is a fabulous thing. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

Especially sometimes when I'm in the children's room with my granddaughter, and the children are playing, and I will just start talking to one of the other parents. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

In summary, people seek out the library as a place where they can find solitude. Social interaction is welcome, but in small doses. Men more often come to the library alone, while women more often visit with children.

Life changes

Near the end of our interviews, we asked participants a series of questions about life changes they anticipated in the coming year. All but two of the participants engaged with the question. Nearly half of those 28 participants cited professional (12) or academic (1) changes, such as undertaking a job search, starting a nonprofit, planning for retirement or going to graduate school. About as many cited household (8) or family (4) changes, including moving, purchasing a house, celebration planning or welcoming a baby to the family. A few participants cited wellness (4) or leisure (2) goals, including weight loss or vacation planning.

Of these 28 participants who spoke about life changes, most (22) said they expected the library would play a role in their lives in the coming year. When asked how they might use the library as a result of their upcoming changes, most spoke of research (14) or borrowing (10).

On job searching: *When you mention the resume, I'd probably look and see if there's something within the library to take a look at that or get a book or something so that I can look at formats that I might like. [#29-F/45-54/NWL]*

On starting a nonprofit: *It'll probably shift ... maybe utilizing the branches more to find more legal stuff through the library's resources. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]*

On planning a run for political office: *It's always useful to be able to go and look at a different set of resources. There are books out there for everything. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]*

On considering divorce and selling a house: *All of my big life decisions, I go to library because I know I'll find resources to help me. The library has resources to help make big decisions. [#13-M/45-54/NWL]*

On expecting a new grandchild: *I might be getting books aimed more for babies, when I check them out. Because I really want him to love to read, too. When he's old enough to be aware, I may bring him to the baby time story time. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]*

On improving health: *I always research health issues at library.* [#03-F/55-64/OWL]

On losing weight: *Seeing a wider genre than just mystery—cookbooks or running and fitness type books.* [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

Several (5) spoke of using the library space.

On job searching: *I've used it as a meeting spot, just in the lobby... I've come here when I've had phone interviews.* [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

On attending graduate school: *I will probably be there more often after school just because you can only stay at school for so long, need a change of place.* [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

A few spoke of digital and online services (3) or technology (1).

On job searching: *I'm hoping to get a better resume so the whole career thing will come together. I know there are a lot of resources that have been very beneficial, like [Gale] Courses. There's a lot of good stuff there.* [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

On job searching: *I'm sure I'll be sitting here looking up things, using the Wi-Fi.* [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Just two each spoke about programs and children's services.

On job searching: *I could see using different services, if they had a resume-writing workshop.* [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

On having a third baby: *We'll probably still do a toddler story time. The baby story time is not as stimulating for toddlers.* [#30-F/35-44/WPK]

Of the six who did not anticipate using the library to help, four were anticipating household changes.

In summary, people envision the library supporting them as they undertake life changes, from personal to professional. The resources people expect to use mirror the top core service areas overall—borrowing and space.

Everyday life

During the course of our interviews, each and every participant revealed ways in which the library is part of their lives.

Some participants use the library to read and relax:

- The 45-54-year-old woman [#29] who learned how to download audiobooks to listen to on an upcoming drive;
- The 65+-year-old man [#25] who has more time to read now that he's retired;
- The 25-34-year-old woman [#09] grateful for a space to relax while supporting her special needs children.

Other participants use the library to learn and explore:

- The 55-64-year-old man [#02] who was reading a book about how men and women communicate differently;

- The 35-44-year-old woman [#30] who was seeking to develop her parenting skills as she's expecting her third child;
- The 25-34-year-old man [#26] who appreciates how staff pick titles expand his horizons;
- The 45-54-year-old woman [#06] who uses the library to research backpacking for an upcoming bike trek;
- The 35-44-year-old man [#10] who borrowed books to plan a vacation.

Some use the library to solve problems:

- The 55-64-year-old woman [#04] who used the library to scan some important paperwork for her files;
- The 45-54-year-old man [#13] who uses Consumer Reports to research used car purchases.

Others use the library to meet personal goals:

- The 65+-year-old woman [#07] who uses the library to reduce her subscriptions to magazines;
- The 18-24-year-old woman [#05] who uses the library to cut costs while saving with her husband for their first home;
- The 35-44-year-old man [#15] who expects to borrow books when considering whether to start a family with his wife.

Some use the library to work and study:

- The 18-24-year-old woman [#14] who uses the library space to do her lesson planning;
- The 18-24-year-old man [#19] who uses the library space to focus when working on his graduate studies;
- The 35-44-year-old woman [#17] who recently went back to school and needs a quiet place to study;
- The 25-34-year-old man [#16] who can rely on the library to have a space to work free from distractions;
- The 45-54-year-old woman [#28] who homeschools her daughter and uses the library to meet with a homeschool group.

Others use library resources to connect with loved ones:

- The 65+-year-old woman [#03] who brings her grandchildren to the library every Saturday;
- The 55-64-year-old woman [#08] who borrowed cookbooks to prepare holiday meals to accommodate family members' special diets;
- The 18-24-year-old man [#20] who alternates choosing DVD series to watch with his mother;
- The 45-54-year-old woman [#23] who wanted to pick up a series to read with her daughter while she was on bed rest during her pregnancy;
- The 45-54-year-old man [#12] who borrows DVDs to watch with his wife;

- The 55-64-year-old man [#18] who brought his children to see his friend perform at February by the Fire.

Some use the library for more impactful reasons:

- The 55-64-year-old woman [#27] who helped out with cleaning up the garden area at Northwest Library;
- The 65+-year-old man [#01] who attended a program and revisited the civil rights movement;
- The 55-64-year-old woman [#24] seeking resources to help her transgender student;
- The 25-34-year-old woman [#22] seeking resources to start a nonprofit;
- The 35-44-year-old woman [#21] using the library to plan a run for local office.

Finally, there is the 35-44-year-old library superfan, who considers the library a beloved destination:

We go other places but we always come back here—it's what we do. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

In summary, the library supports people in a multitude of big and small ways. People may not use every service the library offers and they may not come to us first for every want or need, but the library is, without a doubt, deeply entwined in their everyday lives.

Making life better

We concluded our interviews by asking participants to imagine having a magic wand and to describe what they would change about the library to make it better for them and their lives.

Nearly half of the interview participants (13) took the opportunity to express that they appreciate the library just as it is.

Just more of the same... I'm very happy. I come in, I look at the new books, I get what I've ordered. [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

I like a lot of the stuff that you are doing. [#14-F/18-24/WPK]

There's so much good about your system already. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

I just find the library wonderful, so I just don't have any complaints. [#07-F/55-64/NWL]

I like the library—it's really good! ... It's not broken! I don't know how to improve upon it. It's really well done. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

Nearly as many (12) simply envisioned the library doing more of what we already offer.

I would move it two doors down from my house. [#21-F/35-44/WPK]

A library five minutes from home is better. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

In magic wand world, the library closest to me has a much bigger selection. [#16-M/18-24/OWL]

More copies of popular items. [#05-F/18-24/NWL]

Timeliness of getting new stuff... If I could just expedite the process. [#19-M/18-24/OWL]

Maybe bigger, to hold more stuff. [#06-F/45-54/NWL]

If you were open more. You're already open a lot, I get it. But even more would be even better! [#02-M/55-64/OWL]

I'd like more lobby seating, more comfortable seating. [#11-F/35-44/OWL]

Most participants (19) focused on the atmosphere of the library—some (13) wanted the library to be more comfortable and cozy, while others (5) called for modernization.

It would feel like home, just being warm and engaging. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

I would love to see overstuffed chairs and fireplaces, anything like that. [#27-F/55-64/NWL]

I want that cozy feeling... Let's do a fake fireplace with the comfy couches and chairs. [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

The library was brighter with lots of glass and natural lighting and appealing flooring that made the space feel cozy and comfortable. People felt comfortable in the library reading. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

Everyone wants a modern space. Cool lighting and cool furniture. [#17-F/35-44/OWL]

While your library is nice, it could use some sprucing up. It would be nice for the library to look more fresh. [#22-F/25-34/WPK]

I find the space kind of claustrophobic, which I think is part of why I don't tend to spend a lot of time here. I'd love to see much more open space with lots of plants. [#24-F/55-65/OWL]

More open floor plan would be nice. [#18-M/55-64/OWL]

Either way, nearly one third (8) brought up coffee as a part of the atmosphere they were looking for at the library.

I know there's always been a big thing with food and library books, but coffee! Maybe something like that, where it feels more café-like. [#17-F/35-44/OWL]

I would add a barista. [#10-M/35-44/WPK]

A coffee shop would be nice to have. [#20-M/18-24/OWL]

A little coffee shop, so that I could take some "me time." [#23-F/45-54/WPK]

For heaven's sake, why can't you have coffee? [#08-F/55-64/OWL]

In their answers to this question, several participants shared highly individualized wishes for the library: a gated, attended children's area [#30-F/35-44/WPK]; a USPS shipping center [#11-F/35-44/OWL]; delivery estimates for items in the reserve queue [#03-F/55-64/OWL]; home access to Adobe Creative Cloud [#19-M/18-24/OWL]; a soundproof room for audio and video editing [#14-F/18-24/WPK]; museum-like exhibits of artifacts [#15-M/35-44/WPK]; and reserved seating with coffee delivery upon arrival [#23-F/45-54/WPK]. These participants envision a library that meets their personal needs.

Likewise, several participants (5) described the library as a flexible space accommodating a variety of uses.

I have been impressed how libraries in general have redesigned themselves... Study spaces and coffee shops... You can borrow CDs and DVDs and check out online books... I like that the library has evolved to not be dinosaurs. [#25-M/65+/OWL]

This is a place where more things can happen. And that it's your library, it's your community place—it can be a meeting space, it can be a study space, it can be just a relaxation space—you know, it's nice to just in a chair, read the newspaper. [#04-F/55-64/OWL]

More of a social area to interact with others and then of course quiet study areas... A place that you would want to go, like a destination. We're all looking for experiences, right? [#17-F/35-44/OWL]

In summary, many people appreciate the traditional library services we offer and simply want more. Most people have strong opinions about the library atmosphere and how they want the library to feel, from cozy and comfortable to open and modern. People want the library to provide an experience that meets their needs and the needs of the community.

DISCUSSION

After reviewing the findings of this study against the copious data we've collected over the years, there are some clear themes that emerge. The library is operating among a crowded field within the community. While the library stands out for some services, people often turn elsewhere to meet their needs.

A crowded field

Technology and online services

People in our community are not dissimilar from those across the country. Just a small share use online services, such as databases, and the number has been declining in the last few years (Horrigan, 2016). A growing number of people are reading e-books, but print books remain far more popular (Perrin, 2016).

In Worthington, it's no wonder that our survey respondents report lower levels of computer use than other library services and that computer use has been on the decline. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 87% of households in the Worthington school district had a broadband internet subscription in 2013, rising to 95% in 2018, with 95% of households having a computer in 2013, rising to 98% in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018c).

When it comes to digital media, according to Quantcast Measure, the majority of visitors to the library website are heavy consumers of streaming media: 87% of visitors to our website are affiliated with Netflix at a rate of 1.4 times the average internet user; 76% are affiliated with Spotify, at 1.9x average; and 55% are affiliated with Hulu, at 2.6x average (Quantcast, 2019a). Also, visitors to our website are more likely to visit a variety of subscription news sites at higher rates than the average internet user: *dispatch.com* (18.7x), *wsj.com* (3.3x), *nytimes.com* (2.3x) and *washingtonpost.com* (1.9x) (Quantcast, 2019b).

The library's technology and online services exist within a varied landscape of options, personal and commercial. Our computers serve as back up when people's home internet access is down, or are a means to access our office services. People use the library as well as a variety of subscription digital media resources. They may start their browsing elsewhere even with the intention to end up at the library. It is not an either-or proposition—people are not choosing Amazon and Netflix instead of the library. People's use of commercial and fee-based services is not causing them to turn away from the library. People deliberately choose the service that best meets their needs at the time.

Reference services

At first blush, it may seem alarming that reference services are on the decline, that people are not using our specialized reference services and are more often turning elsewhere when they need help or information. However, the library and information science literature has long shown that

people seeking information take the path of least effort (Allen, 1977; Connaway, Dickey & Radford, 2011; Dervin, 1983; Durrance, 1988; Zipf, 1949) and choose convenience over accuracy when selecting sources (Krikelas, 1983), preferring to turn to interpersonal and informal sources such as friends, family and neighbors (Agada, 1999; Chen & Hernon, 1982; Dervin, Ellyson, Hawkes, Guagano & White, 1984; Julien 1999; Savolainen, 1995; Williamson, 1997). As noted above, at a national level, the percentage of people visiting libraries to get help from librarians has been on the decline (Horrigan, 2016). And recent research reveals that nearly half of Americans use digital tools when doing research for major life decisions, a quarter consult other people and just 2% turn to the library (Turner & Rainie, 2020).

With the release of the Apple iPhone in 2007 and the proliferation of mobile devices in the last decade, people have ready reference available at virtually all times in their pockets and purses. And, as noted above, the vast majority of Worthington residents own a smartphone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018d). Nowadays, people use multiple sources when researching, usually starting on the internet (Turner & Rainie, 2020). People gather important information online via passive information acquisition—often picking up what they need to know while undertaking other browsing activities (Liu, 2020). The library no longer corners the information market. People find other sources more suitable for answering their everyday questions.

While the library is valued for borrowing books and its emphasis on reading and literacy, people do not think of approaching the library for recommendations on what to read. Nationally, the number of people visiting the library website to read book reviews or get book recommendations has declined (Horrigan, 2016). We heard that the people in our community take advantage of dozens of information sources outside the library and trust their established, personal networks of family, friends and colleagues. When it comes to the library, people prefer a more passive approach to recommendations.

Programs and events

While the number of people across the country attending classes, programs or lectures at the library has increased in recent years (Horrigan, 2016), just under half of Americans consider programs or events for children or teens to be very important and less than one-third rate adult programs or events that highly (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Our work has shown that more people are attending programs and events elsewhere than the library and library programs rank far below other library services. Our interviews did not shed much light on *why* people choose to attend programs and events elsewhere. We did hear that people lead busy lives and don't prioritize library programs. Interview participants most often mentioned programs for children and families, longstanding program series and high-profile events.

Little research has been undertaken on library programs and events. The American Library Association has recently sought to fill this research gap by undertaking a study on library programming, surveying the types, topics, formats and audiences of programs at public libraries across the country (Barchas-Lichtenstein et al., 2019). Thus far, the focus of the work, still in its first phase, has been on developing a framework for library program categories and competency

training areas. We will look forward to the project's future work, which promises to focus more on assessment and evaluation of community need and impact.

Stand-out services

The majority of people use the library in traditional ways—"to find library materials and to have a quiet place to enjoy them" (Lance et al., 2001, p. 52). Recent research shows that what even young people—college students and members of Generation Z—value most about the library is books and space (Vercelletto, 2019; Wong, 2019). We stand out from the field not just on *what* we offer—borrowing and space—but also *how* we offer it—affordability, convenience and aesthetic experience.

Borrowing

It's no wonder that the library is the destination of choice when it comes to borrowing items: the library is practically the only option in the community. Nearly everyone undertakes borrowing activities at the library, much more frequently than they do elsewhere. Everyone *checks out items* from the library. People *search the catalog* more frequently than they shop online and they *browse the shelves* at the library more frequently than they shop in person. People *reserve items online to pick up* at the library more frequently than they do online purchases for in-store pick up. Borrowing is our premiere, distinctive service.

Books and reading are central to how people see the library and what people want from us. Our collection is broader and easier to access than the stock in bookstores. Our emphasis on literacy reinforces values that parents want to instill in their children. As noted above, borrowing books is the most popular activity at libraries nationwide (Horrigan, 2016). Americans consider reading—of fiction and nonfiction—the greatest benefit libraries have to offer (Sin & Vakkari, 2015). Reading develops the brain, provides therapeutic benefits and connects us to one another and libraries have a mandate to promote reading (Rothbauer, 2019).

At the same time, borrowing from the library plays an important role when people face changes in their lives, from considering whether to start a family and embarking on a job search to losing weight and starting a nonprofit.

The most interesting of our novel services are related to borrowing, either services that facilitate borrowing—*pick up lockers, drive-through window and personalized book recommendations*—or actual materials—*light therapy lamps, Binge Boxes and Adventure Kits*.

As we put it in 2016, borrowing is our brand (Reuter, 2016).

Space

As a destination, the library offers an unparalleled in-person experience preferred by many. The library ambiance is considered welcoming, comfortable and peaceful. People in our community, like those nationally, believe the library should offer more comfortable spaces for reading, working and relaxing (Horrigan, 2016). Unlike coffee shops, our space does not put demands on people to spend money or move along. People can spread out, spend time and feel safe.

The library offers a uniquely all-purpose space. People come to us to escape and to pursue their own interests, whether recreational or intellectual. Within our spaces we offer a variety of amenities, including comfortable seating and Wi-Fi access, along with reliably helpful staff.

People come to the library seeking solitude, at the same time welcoming the warm (but brief) interactions they have with library staff members and other patrons. Loneliness and social isolation can have damaging effects on individuals, but connecting with another person through something as simple as small talk can bring about positive outcomes (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Shared spaces—like libraries—offer opportunities for people to form these connections (Klinenberg, 2018).

Affordability

The library stands out for its free—and low cost—services. We outshine bookstores, coffee shops and copy shops for our affordability. People recognize that tax dollars fund libraries, but appreciate that they incur no upfront or ongoing costs at the library. People can come and go as they see fit, using the library as much or as little as they wish. Affordable library services suit the needs of the young, the old, families and the frugal.

Convenience

Convenience trumps everything, no matter the person or the situation (Connaway, Dickey & Radford, 2011). Convenience comes up when people talk about a range of library activities from borrowing and facility use to children’s services and technology. The most interesting of our novel services are focused around convenience: *pick up lockers, passports, notaries and drive-through window*. We make it easy to use the library and people find that the library fits into their lives.

Aesthetic experience

Aesthetic experience influences people in powerful ways: when objects are attractive, people find they work better (Norman, 2004); when focused on the personal experience of reading, students demonstrate sophisticated understanding of texts (Many, 1991). Engaging reading experiences are at the heart of book selection for children and adults alike (Pejtensen, 1986; Reuter, 2007; Ross, 1999; Spiller, 1980). People wax poetic about the aesthetic experience of the library. Entering the library space immediately evokes a mood and state of mind. People borrow books and movies to enjoy themselves and spend time with their families. The experience of reading a print book is pleasurable (while e-books offer a convenient, but lesser substitute). The most interesting of our novel services are focused around engaging experiences: *personalized book recommendations, light therapy lamps, Binge Boxes and Adventure Kits*. People are looking for ways to enjoy themselves and the library makes that possible.

CONCLUSION

The hand-wringing and hostile articles we cited at the outset of this report have been right about some things—search engines, streaming media, Wi-Fi-connected coffee shops and certain online retailers *are* a major part of people’s lives, as this research has shown. However, we believe that the pundits are wrong about what this means for the library. Rather than supplanting us, it is clear that, for our patrons, the library comfortably co-exists within—and often stands out from—a crowded field of services.

In this research, we see that people tend to be unaware of the non-traditional materials and specialized technology services we offer, which are also among the least used. More revealing, however, is that many of our novel services are of little interest to people even *after* they learn of them. We stand out not for our “fancy library services” (Wong, 2019), but for our most established, core services.

Thinking about what people value about the library and what sets us apart in the community, we conclude with four key principles we can use to guide us as we hone, expand and evolve library services.

Library amplified

When we ask people to consider how to improve the library, by and large, they are not asking us to reinvent ourselves. They value us as we are and ask only for the library *amplified*: more, bigger, faster, closer. More books, bigger spaces, faster delivery, closer to home. Our focus should be on offerings that amplify our already well-loved services.

- How we can give people more of what they love about the library?

Friction free

People are busy and seek convenience in their lives. We can offer convenience within the library with initiatives such as automatic renewals or discontinuation of fines. The library can also offer services that help people in their lives such as passport and notary service. By focusing on convenience, the library can help make people’s lives friction free.

- How can we make the library easier to use? How can the library make people’s lives easier?

Alone together

Our library spaces are one of our biggest draws. Soft seating, fireplaces and study rooms offer people comfort and peace. (The only thing missing is coffee.) While library use is frequently solitary, people nevertheless appreciate the sense of belonging they find at the library. We should

focus on providing spaces that reinforce this atmosphere and support people in being alone *together*.

- How can the library honor people's wishes for solitude? How can the library foster a sense of belonging for people?

Human scale

Although we often talk about the broad social good and the overall return on investment that public libraries bring to communities, the reasons people come to us are deeply personal. When people tell us about the role that the library plays in their lives, they talk about small, intimate details. Day in and day out, the library serves individual people's needs for recreation, escape, growth and connection. The library should operate at a human scale, with offerings that connect to people personally and also by endeavoring to convey our own personality.

- How we can make the experience of the library more personal?

In conclusion, this research has been affirming of the place of public libraries in the community and in people's lives. This study, together with our prior research and usage statistics, provides overwhelming evidence that Worthington Libraries is far from becoming obsolete. Getting caught up in efforts to be "more than *just* books" or to prioritize "fancy library services" may cause us to lose sight of the fundamental reasons why the people in our community love the library. People are telling us what they value about the library. We only have to listen and be prepared to act on what we hear.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.	Survey instrument.....	88
Appendix B.	Interview script.....	92
Appendix C.	Consent form.....	100
Appendix D.	Activity bar charts	101
Appendix E.	Service heat maps.....	123
Appendix F.	Revised V&R Code Book	126
Appendix G.	Interview question coding scheme	131
Appendix H.	Key to activity short labels.....	132