Long Overdue

A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About **LIBRARIES** in the 21st Century

PUBLIC AGENDA

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Prepared by Public Agenda

With Support from
Americans for Libraries Council
and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Future Libraries: A View from Americans for Libraries Council

At the turn of the last century, a visionary philanthropist addressed the need to educate Americans to ensure our country's place in the world and saw the potential of the public library to help achieve that goal. Andrew Carnegie offered to build libraries if communities would contribute land, provide money for annual maintenance and exercise governance and oversight. He gave communities incentive to participate in a national movement and between 1881 and 1917 invested the equivalent of $3 billion to build 1,689 libraries across the nation (Jones, Theodore. "Carnegie Libraries Across America: A Public Legacy." New York: Preservation Press, 1997).

The result of Carnegie's investment and the involvement of communities helped educate generations of Americans and propel the United States to its position as a world leader in the 20th century. Just as important, Carnegie's gift helped fix the library in the American consciousness as a significant public institution that needed and deserved broad public support. It is telling that a century after Carnegie's compact with American communities, nearly 90 percent of library funding derives from local public dollars.

Today, at the beginning of a new century, libraries elicit both excitement and questions. With the advent of computers and search engines, digital libraries and the Internet, people ask if libraries are essential and whether they should command priority in the competition for public dollars. Is the public library rooted in the past, or is it an essential tool for equity, opportunity and community development in the information age? What place do Americans themselves see for libraries in the 21st century? And what about elected officials, those with the power to approve or to cut library budgets?

These questions are not trivial. For the millions of Americans who are current or potential beneficiaries of library services, the stakes are high — and so too are the potential benefits. A growing number of communities are determined to keep their libraries at the leading edge of technology, thus providing

To adapt Carnegie's compact to today's world, libraries and their believers must show clearly what libraries can do for their communities. Otherwise we risk losing this most flexible but vulnerable of community assets.

small businesses with resources to compete globally; giving residents access to credible, current health information; and making libraries vital information access points for everyone. These communities reveal the vast potential of libraries for the future.
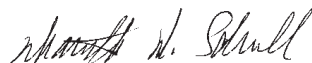
In those communities where the case for libraries is less clear and competition for public funds is high, there are disturbing indicators that support for libraries is slipping. It is up to a new generation of citizens to keep Carnegie's vision alive, stimulating local governments to invest in the library in exchange for an informed community with access to all the resources they need — including job search help, a safe place for children, free digital resources and other 21st-century library features that Carnegie could not foresee. To adapt Carnegie's compact to today's world, libraries and their believers must show clearly what libraries can do for their communities. Otherwise we risk losing this most flexible but vulnerable of community assets.

Americans for Libraries Council, a national organization dedicated to raising awareness and support for libraries, believes that these questions have important implications for libraries and the communities they serve. We have partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to commission Public Agenda, a nonpartisan public opinion research and public engagement organization, to undertake an in-depth national opinion study that places libraries in their community contexts. We are pleased to present "Long Overdue," a report that explores the true position of public libraries today, in the minds not only of library users, but of the people who run libraries and those who provide oversight and funding. This study is the first step in the development of a national agenda for libraries and library funding in the 21st century.

[signature]

Diantha Dow Schull
President, Americans for Libraries Council

A Mayor's View

We have great expectations for our libraries in Louisville, where half of our city's residents hold library cards and 10,000 people visit a library branch every day.

We rely on libraries for books, of course — from the classics of Charles Dickens to the latest best sellers and children's books. We also expect libraries to offer story hours for our toddlers, reference materials for school projects, skilled librarians and hundreds of computers with free Internet access.

But that's not all. We count on our libraries to ride the cutting edge with new technology and materials — music CDs and instructional DVDs, downloadable books, tools to train (and retrain) our workforce, services for our growing immigrant population and free access to dozens of online subscription databases.

We also use libraries as civic and cultural centers, places where neighborhood groups hold meetings and residents gather for special events, from gallery shows to speakers to free musical performances.

And if we believe that education and lifelong learning are keys to opportunity for individuals and our entire community, no local government institution serves all those needs better than the public library.

As we look ahead in an information age with rapidly changing technology, we see the library as an information powerhouse available round-the-clock… anywhere…to anyone with a library card and a computer with an Internet connection. This round-the-clock library is not just an appealing vision for tomorrow, but one that we are fortunate to enjoy today.

Yet we do not want our libraries to lose their roots — supporting reading, childhood literacy and lifelong learning and meeting the greater expectations of cities and citizens in the 21st century.

Jerry E. Abramson
Mayor of Louisville

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Executive Summary

There is a future for public libraries in the Internet age. Even with the vast and increasing amount of information available on the Internet and more competition for public funding, Americans say that public libraries will continue to play a vital role in communities. A strong majority says that if their public library were to shut down, they would feel "that something essential and important has been lost, affecting the whole community" (78 percent). And the feeling that libraries are central to healthy communities is even more common among those who are most actively engaged in communities — the voters, volunteers and contributors who make communities strong and can usually be counted on to raise a ruckus when things go wrong.

With the Internet reshaping so many aspects of our lives, it has become common for prognosticators to speculate about the ultimate demise of all sorts of institutions that many of us have come to take for granted. We were not at all certain what we would hear from the public when we asked them to assess the future of public libraries.

For Every Child, a Good Library

In "Long Overdue: A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About Libraries in the 21st Century," we hear loud and clear that people believe their communities must have well-functioning public libraries in order to be healthy and strong. Large majorities say that all children should have a good, safe, appealing library in their neighborhood; that libraries play a crucial role in preserving permanent and unalterable records; and that government should support the wiring of libraries so that low-income people can have access to the Internet.

At a time of broad concern about wasteful public spending, and when we hear of communities refusing to pay more taxes for public education or "essential services," 71 percent say that libraries spend public money well. Fifty-two percent say that if their local library needed additional funding, they would favor tax increases to generate the necessary resources — significantly more than the numbers who favor charging users (32 percent) or reducing services (20 percent) as options for solving a financial shortfall.

In an age of deep cynicism about the performance of all sorts of public services, public libraries are rated "A" more often than any other public service we asked about.

In many ways, people believe that libraries are more essential now than ever before. Americans say that since so many businesses are selling information, we absolutely need public libraries to provide vital information free of charge to anyone who needs it. They also strongly agree that libraries are an important, quiet oasis from fast-paced, stressful lives.

Higher Grades than Most

In an age when people are often deeply cynical about the performance of all sorts of public services, from public education to the police to cultural institutions, public libraries are rated "A" more often than any other public service we asked about. Indeed, public libraries seem almost immune to the distrust that is associated with so many other institutions. People have high expectations of their libraries. Topping their list of priorities is that the basic services they have come to expect from libraries remain free of charge to the public. They also expect libraries to have enough current books for children, numerous reference materials and friendly, knowledgeable librarians available. Libraries should provide convenient reading hours and special programs for children and should have well-maintained buildings and books and information that are organized for easy self-service. The "top 10" list of public priorities for libraries also includes providing safe and productive gathering places for teenagers, being open on evenings and weekends and having plenty of current books for adults. And for the most part, these public expectations are matched by the libraries' performance, the public told us. People give especially high grades to their public libraries for having library

buildings that are well maintained, having comfortable places to read and having enough friendly, knowledgeable librarians to provide help when needed.

"Community Soldiers" Could Fight for Libraries

There are people in every community who make things happen but don't necessarily hold any official post. These are the folks we refer to as "community soldiers," because no battle can be won without them. The good news for libraries is that these citizens — who nearly always vote in local elections and involve themselves in community organizations and activities — are heavy users and big fans of libraries.

But even though they may be considered champions of libraries, they are not very aware of the potential financial vulnerability of their local libraries. While 45 percent of the civically engaged think their local government has not provided enough money and assistance to the public libraries in their communities, 42 percent think they have, and 13 percent say they simply do not know. It appears that those citizens who could be counted on to rally to the cause if libraries were in financial peril are no more likely than the general population to be aware of the challenges facing libraries today.

This research suggests there is strong potential for vocal support from activist citizens who could argue effectively for consistent and reliable financial support for public libraries.

Computers and Internet Access Are Priorities

Although people clearly want libraries to ace the basics — materials, hours and service — they also expect more and more from libraries in this age of the Internet. "Long Overdue"

reveals a great deal about libraries and technology. Libraries are anything but relics of the past. They are viewed as key players in our digitized future. Two-thirds of survey respondents say that having enough computers and online services for people should be a high priority for their local library. More than six in 10 favor wiring libraries so that those who might not be able to afford computers in their home can learn computer skills and get online. And those who think that libraries are just becoming the "information resources of last resort" for those who can't afford a home computer seem to be mistaken. Advanced computer users and families with higher incomes are even more likely to use public libraries and the technology services they offer. But, not surprisingly, people with few computer skills are the most likely to say wiring libraries to provide for "have-nots" should be a high priority.

Needed — More Convenient Hours, More for Teens

But not everything is milk and honey in the land of libraries. There are real challenges for libraries today. Only 35 percent of survey respondents say their local library gets an "A" when it comes to having convenient hours so people can use the services, only 28 percent give libraries an "A" for offering access to catalogs and databases through the Internet, 26 percent give an "A" for having enough computers and online services in the library for the people who want to use them and just 24 percent give an "A" for providing reading hours, homework help and study space for children and teenagers. And these are services that the public rates among its highest priorities for libraries. Clearly there are opportunities to improve the service delivery of local libraries.

Library leaders would like to do much more in the way of customer service and innovative programming. But as our interviews with public leaders attest, finances are always a challenge. Opinion leaders generally share the public's high regard for libraries but are more conscious of the tenuous financial condition of many public libraries. Some public libraries are very comfortable with the funding they receive, but most are not. While the public remains largely unaware of the fiscal pressures on libraries today, civic and business leaders believe that public libraries are often first on the chopping block when state and local budgets are cut.

Civic Leaders See Strengths, Vulnerabilities

Civic leaders do see the great strengths of the public library — as an information center in the digital age, as an important resource for those who have the least resources available to them and as the "go to" place for all manner of public functions, including health information, job services, immigrant acculturation and adult literacy training. But they also see challenges for libraries that need to be addressed by library leadership. Many civic leaders pointed to public libraries' seemingly infinite varieties of governance structures as a major stumbling block. Public libraries' lack of marketing, impassive advocacy and isolation from the community were also cited as shortcomings in library performance.

This research study identified several specific areas where civic leadership, public citizens and library leaders all seem to agree that there is a major opportunity for public libraries to step in and address community needs. These include developing better programming and services for teens, addressing illiteracy and poor reading skills among adults, providing ready access to information about government services (including making public documents and forms quickly and easily available) and providing much greater access to computers for all.

Yet venturing into these areas would likely require financial resources that many libraries do not currently have. The civic leaders we spoke to questioned whether a groundswell of citizen support for public libraries would emerge in their communities. This research suggests that there is, in fact, strong potential for vocal support from activist citizens who could argue effectively for consistent and reliable financial support for public libraries. It is up to library leadership to take the steps necessary to harness this potential and make it a reality.

A Public Unaware of What Could Be Lost

Recent history in Salinas, Calif., a community that nearly totally closed its libraries (and is profiled in the report), points to the passion for libraries that can emerge when a funding crisis imperils a treasured institution. But since the vast majority of the public does not sense that its own libraries may be at risk, most people do not see a reason to raise their voices in concern. It simply is not something that is on their radar screen today. The "canary in the coal mine" metaphor has a place here. While leaders have pricked up their ears to the distressed calls of the canary, the public seems to hear only a sweet song and no hint of impending trouble.

For public libraries today, the greatest challenge is not in convincing the public of their worth — in the present or for the future. According to these research findings, libraries are highly valued public institutions serving multiple needs that, the public notes, will certainly continue to be relevant with changing times. But libraries cannot survive on accolades alone. If they are to compete successfully for dwindling public dollars, if they are to develop the community connections and visibility that they require to thrive, public libraries will need to look carefully at opportunities to strengthen their role in addressing the serious problems in their own communities. Then they need to start speaking up and reaching out to the community soldiers who can help buttress this vital community institution.

Introduction to the Research

America's public libraries are complex creatures. But instead of being like the elephant of the old proverb, examined and misidentified by many blindfolded men, this research has taken off the blindfolds and allowed the many voices to communicate what they feel so that we can accurately describe the whole. Public Agenda's multilayered research process is particularly well suited to this kind of nuanced subject matter.

The core of this report is based on a national, random sample public opinion survey (See Methodology, page 65). But, as is routinely the case with Public Agenda research, the survey came out of a larger process that started with extensive background research, interviews with experts and focus groups across the country. With this particular project, we found that the focus groups and leader interviews in five communities yielded exceptionally rich insights into the challenges being faced by different types of library systems across the country. We believe that we actually had so many probing hands on this elephant that we can, from individuals' descriptions and survey responses, fill in the outlines drawn by previous studies with a great deal more detail and color.

This Public Agenda report sticks to the overall national picture, but "Long Overdue" adds to the national data five "Voices from…" profiles that are intended to give the reader a better sense of some of the individual successes and challenges library systems in a variety of different communities face — the familiar buildings, the diverse neighbors who staff and use the library, the broad range of problems they confront every day and the multimedia resources the library makes available to all.

These "Voices from…" profiles are not intended to be thorough case studies. Rather, they illustrate the diversity of library systems and the range of economic and social issues they face. Taken together, we believe that these five glimpses can capture truths recognizable to many other American communities.

It is important to note, too, that libraries operate under radically diverse funding and governing structures. A few are private institutions; some are embedded in public school systems, local governments and even state constitutions; many rely on a combination of local, state and national tax dollars, along with significant private philanthropy in many cases. These issues determine who controls the library, its budget and its prospects for responding to evolving community needs.

To help the reader better understand the whole of the library world and to put the public opinion results in context, we've included some background facts about U.S. libraries on the following pages.

America's Public Libraries at a Glance

|	
9,211	Total Public Library Systems
16,541	Total Library Buildings with Branches
1,284,175,000	Total Library Visits Nationwide (4.6 per capita)
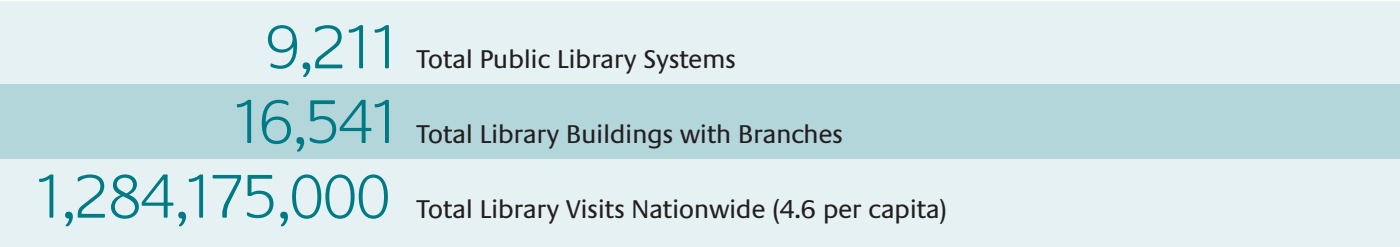
Source: "Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2003," published in September 2005 by the National Center for Education Statistics.
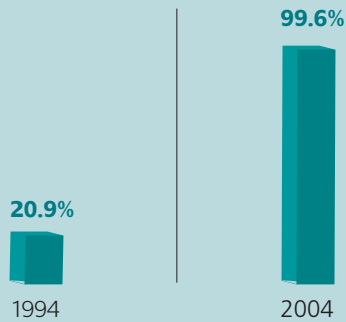
Trends over last decade:

- Visits per capita increased by 27 percent: 3.33 (1991) to 4.24 (2002)

- Circulation increased by 41 percent: 677 million (1990) to 956 million (2002)

- Reference transactions per capita increased by 14 percent: 0.97 (1991) to 1.11 (2002)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

Children's Program Attendance Increased

35,573,000 — 1993

51,800,000 — 2001

Source: ALA, citing National Center for Education Statistics, Public Libraries in the United States.

Libraries' Total Operating Revenue (2003)

3%
9%
11%
80%

80% Local sources (8.7 billion)

11% State resources

9% Other sources (gifts, donations, interest, fees, grants, etc.)

1% Federal sources

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2003" (published Sept 2005).

Libraries and the Internet

99.6%

20.9%

1994   2004

In 1994, 20.9% of public libraries were connected to the Internet; in 2004, 99.6% were connected... and 98.9% offered public access to the Internet.

Source: "Public Libraries Struggle to Meet Internet Demand: New Study Shows Libraries Need Support to Sustain Online Services" American Libraries, 36 no. 7 78-9 Aug 2005.

Urban, Suburban and Rural Libraries

Libraries serving counties of:
Less than 25,000 residents

79%

Less than 2,500 residents

29%

More than 25,000 residents

21%

Source: American Library Association.

Library Governance

1%
1%
2%
2%
53%
10%
14%
15%
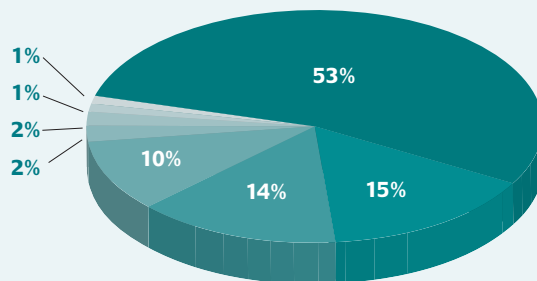
53%	Part of municipal government
15%	Independent nonprofit
14%	Separate government unit or "library district"
10%	Part of county government
2%	Multijurisdictional legal basis under an intergovernmental agreement
2%	Part of a school district
1%	Part of a joint city/county government
1%	"Other"

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Public Libraries in the U.S.: Fiscal Year 2003" (published September 2005).

Library Construction

■ Roughly stable number of projects for 34 years (1969-2003) at 214 per year... increasing slightly from 1995 to 2003 to an average of 219 per year.

■ But 24 percent increase in number of addition and remodeling projects, and 10 percent decrease in new buildings.

Source: Hall, Richard, "It Just Keeps Booming," "Library Journal" Vol 129, no 20, p. 62, December 15, 2004.

Section I

THE PUBLIC'S VIEW OF LIBRARIES

FINDING ONE:

To the Public, Libraries are Valued, Well-Run Institutions

Libraries receive the best grades of any of the community institutions covered in this study, with nearly half the sample giving them an "A." Moreover, libraries seem to have escaped the public's general cynicism about government waste of taxpayer dollars. A majority of the public says its local libraries use tax money well.

To shed light on the public's views on libraries, Public Agenda conducted nationwide telephone interviews with 1,203 members of the public. This survey was preceded by focus groups in Salinas, Calif.; Providence, R.I.; Columbus, Ga.; Phoenix, Ariz., and Louisville, Ky., to explore the dynamics underlying their attitudes toward their local libraries and their communities in general. The first message to leap out of the research is just how well regarded libraries are as a public institution. Almost half of the Americans questioned in the survey gave a grade of "A" to their community for maintaining well-run libraries, with another 29 percent giving them a "B." By a significant margin, well-run libraries are at the very top of the list of services that

people believe their own local communities do a good job of providing, ranking them ahead of parks, public education, health care and well-maintained streets.
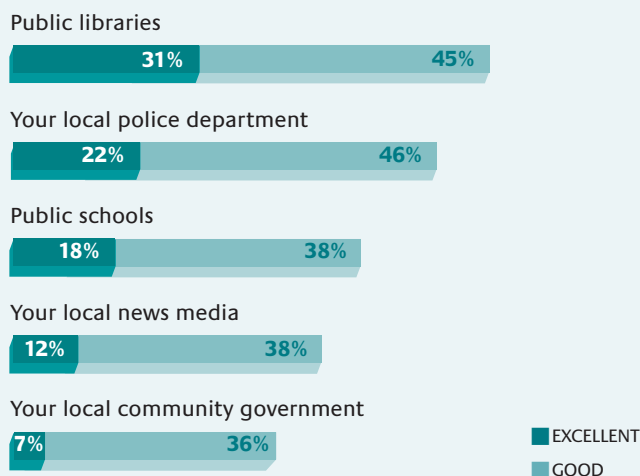
Even among people who rarely (if ever) use the local public library, a majority gives local libraries credit in this regard. Most people say libraries perform an "essential" service in maintaining a productive community, and three-quarters say that if libraries were closed because of lack of funding, communities would "lose something important and valuable." Libraries get good, solid grades for having well-maintained buildings, enough reading materials and friendly, knowledgeable staff. But less than a quarter of Americans give libraries an "A" for their services helping children and teens with homework and providing them with places to gather for valuable program services. Ratings are also less than stellar for libraries' role in making government information and forms easily available. Finally, ratings for providing adult literacy programs, an all-important means of improving job skills for the local workforce, could also be stronger.

When interviewees were asked to assess the performance of local institutions ranging from public schools and the police department to the local news media, libraries again topped the list. For example, more than five times as many people (31 percent) say local public libraries are doing an excellent job, compared with only 7 percent of Americans who say their local community government does an excellent job.

Large majorities of Americans also see libraries as critical institutions in their communities. Over 6 in 10 "strongly agree" that public libraries are essential for "maintaining a productive community," with another 29 percent who say they agree

Top Ratings: Libraries are Most Likely to be Seen as Doing an "Excellent" or "Good" Job

% who say the following are doing an excellent or good job:

Public libraries
31%   **45%**

Your local police department
22%   **46%**

Public schools
18%   **38%**

Your local news media
12%   **38%**

Your local community government
7%   **36%**

■ EXCELLENT
■ GOOD

NOTE: Question wording in charts may be slightly edited for space. Full question wording is available in the Complete Survey Results at the end of this report. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding or the omission of some answer categories.
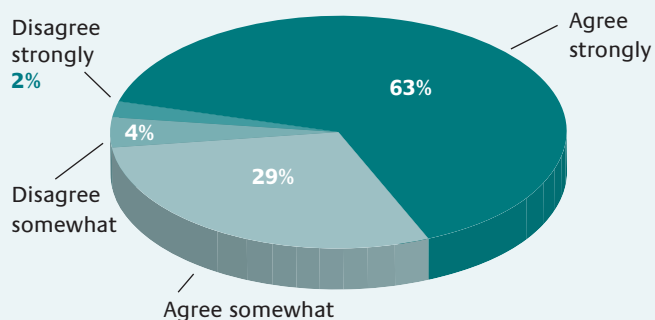
Top of the World: Libraries Top the List of Services Local Communities Do Well

% who give an "A" or "B" grade to their local community for the following:

A	B	
45%	29%	Maintaining well-run libraries
31%	33%	Providing well-run parks
25%	36%	The quality of public education
22%	32%	Quality of local healthcare
21%	34%	Having convenient places for public events and meetings
19%	32%	Having well-maintained streets
18%	30%	Opportunities for voters to meet their political candidates
17%	25%	Public places where people can access the Internet
16%	30%	Offering dependable public transportation
15%	25%	Reducing illiteracy – that is teaching basic reading skills
15%	29%	Affordable quality arts or cultural activities
14%	29%	Affordable quality child care
13%	20%	Having a safe place where teenagers can congregate
9%	27%	Assistance finding employment or training for new careers
7%	18%	Orienting new immigrants to your community and America
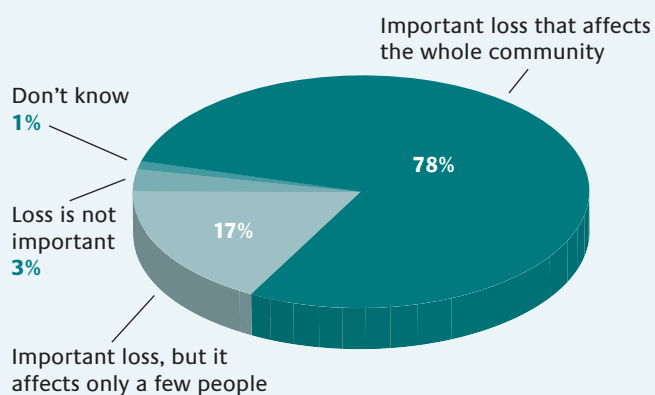
Essential Services: The Public Thinks that Libraries are Critical to their Communities' Health

Public libraries are essential for maintaining a productive community

- Disagree strongly **2%**
- Disagree somewhat **4%**
- Agree somewhat **29%**
- Agree strongly **63%**

Losing the Library Would Hurt Everyone

If your public library were to shut down tomorrow due to lack of funding, would you feel that something essential and important has been lost, affecting the whole community; or that while something important was lost, it really only affects a few people in the community; or the loss would not be important for your community?

- Important loss that affects the whole community **78%**
- Important loss, but it affects only a few people **17%**
- Loss is not important **3%**
- Don't know **1%**

"somewhat." In a similar vein, nearly 8 in 10 say that if the local library were to shut down because of a lack of funding, it would be an important loss "to the whole community," not just something that would affect only a few people.

Participants in the focus groups, conducted in five different communities across the country with a variety of library systems, echoed the survey results on this issue. Many people expressed anxiety when asked about how they would feel if the libraries in their communities were to close because of a lack of funding.

It's almost like you might as well just be burning all the books. Because essentially, for people who can't afford Amazon, essentially that's what it is. It's like literally cutting off access. If you're cutting that off, where's the hope for anything better? As it is, schools are having a hard time. It seems like libraries were the next resource for the average person.
—Female, Salinas

When [my daughter] was young, the town we lived in had story time for kids to get together in the library, and they

would tell stories. When she was five, we went to the library, got her a library card and showed her how important it was. Even though we don't frequent it, it's still something I would hate to see if they were to just close them down.
—*Female, Phoenix*

Essential and Mainly Working Well

The public's high level of satisfaction with libraries stands up even when the questions get down to the details. Asked about more than a dozen different dimensions of library service, the public gives libraries high marks for well-maintained buildings, materials that are in good condition, comfortable places to read and friendly, knowledgeable librarians readily available to help patrons. In fact, majorities or pluralities of the public give their local libraries an "A" or a "B" on 8 out of the 12 items covered. It is worth noting, however, that libraries do not do quite so well in a few key areas. Less than a quarter of Americans, for example, give libraries an "A" for their services helping children and teens with homework and providing places for them to gather after school. Two other areas where libraries don't get stellar marks: making government forms and information easily available and providing literacy programs for adults.

Clean, Friendly and Good Books to Boot: How the Public Rates Library Services

% who give a grade of "A" or "B" to their local public library for each of the following characteristics:

A	B	
56%	24%	Library buildings are well maintained
45%	27%	There are comfortable places to read
42%	28%	Having enough friendly, knowledgeable librarians to provide help when you need it
40%	32%	Materials are in good condition and are easy to find
37%	32%	Having enough books, CDs, videos and magazines so that you have a good selection for pleasure reading, reference or learning about a hobby
35%	31%	Having convenient hours so people can use the services
28%	21%	Offering access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet, so they can be accessed from home or at work
26%	26%	Having enough computers and online services in the library for the people who want to use them
24%	25%	Providing reading hours, homework help and study space for children and teenagers
23%	18%	Having access to government forms and services in the library building, like Medicare or FEMA forms
22%	23%	Providing meeting rooms and auditoriums for the use of community groups and for public activities
17%	21%	Providing literacy and educational programs for adults and seniors
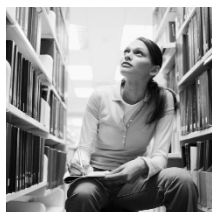
For Most Americans, Traditional Library Services Remain a High Priority

Even in a world of computers and the Internet, the public values the library's traditional services. When respondents were asked what the library's top priorities should be, keeping services free and having enough books for children, good reference materials and a knowledgeable, friendly librarian topped the list. In fact, many of the public's priorities for libraries revolve around services for children.

Across demographic groups, and among regular users* as well as those who haven't been to the library in quite a while, the American public has a clear sense of what is absolutely crucial in a local library and what can be dispensed with. More than 8 in 10 Americans say that keeping services free should be a very high priority. Having enough current books for children, enough reference materials, a friendly, knowledgeable librarian and good programs for children and teens are not far behind in the priority rankings.

Eight in 10 Americans say that even with all that's available on public TV and the Internet, all children need access to a good, safe and appealing library. The vast majority of Americans do not discount the importance of computers and Internet access in libraries. But they overwhelmingly reject the notion that traditional libraries are not needed in the new information age.

As the survey indicates, many of the public's priorities for libraries center on children and reading, and participants in the focus groups frequently spoke to this theme.

> [Kids] can go [to the library], and in that atmosphere they can use their imagination a bit more than they can other places... They're reading a book, creating that imagery in their mind. Two people can read the same story and get a different picture.
> —*Male, Phoenix*

Story Time: Libraries Important for Children

Do you feel that all children should have a good, safe, appealing library in their neighborhoods, or do you think that with all of the great programming on public TV and the many activities children enjoy, libraries just aren't as important in kids' lives as they once were?

Don't know
2%

All children need a library

80%

18%

Libraries aren't as important
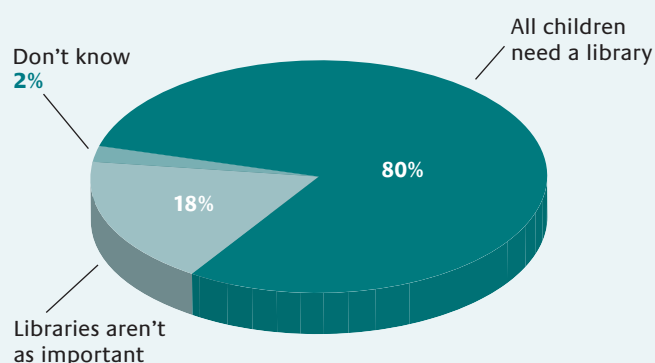
> With my daughter, and then with my older grandson, I think I was able to see how they got organized. They got that sense of accomplishment from actually going and finding the book.
> —*Male, Phoenix*

Given all that's available to most of today's kids — TV, computers, video games, DVDs, iPods and more — it's reasonable to ask whether libraries are as important as they once were. The vast majority of Americans are unequivocal on this matter.

The survey also took a look at public views of the "digital library of the future" — a library where information is stored and made available digitally rather than in traditional books, magazines and journals.

*Library users are defined as those who have visited a public library six or more times in the past year. Non-users have visited five time or less.

Free Access to Books and Helpful Staff: The Public's Priorities

% who say the following should be high priority for their local public library:

84%	Keeping library services free
82%	Having enough current books for children
81%	Having enough reference materials-
81%	Availability of a friendly, knowledgeable librarian
79%	Providing reading hours and other programs for children
76%	Buildings are well maintained
76%	Information and books organized for easy self-service
74%	Being a safe place where teenagers can study and congregate
73%	Being open evening and weekends
72%	Having enough current books for adults
69%	Books are in good condition
69%	Being conveniently located
68%	Adult literacy programs
65%	Having a comfortable place to read
65%	Having enough trained staff working to keep up with the demand
64%	Having enough computers and online services for the people that want to use them
64%	Having access to government forms and services in the library building, like Medicare or FEMA forms
62%	Programs for senior citizens
56%	Adequate parking
55%	Good multimedia collections (CDs/books on tape/DVDs/videos)
52%	Subscribing to good magazines and newspapers
51%	Providing job-searching assistance
48%	Offering access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet, so they can be accessed from home or at work
45%	Providing wireless Internet access inside the library
43%	Providing meeting rooms and auditoriums for the use of community groups and for public activities
41%	Cultural programs or exhibits
40%	Possibility to reserve books online or by phone prior to arriving
40%	Option to check books out yourself to avoid waiting in line
39%	Programs for new immigrants
30%	Book discussion groups
26%	Programs and services for business owners
24%	Having a beautiful building
12%	Having a café inside the library

Keep a Copy for the Files: The Public Values Libraries as Permanent Repositories

Do you feel that, in our digital age, when so much information exists only electronically, libraries play a crucial role in preserving permanent and unalterable records, or there is no longer a need for hard copies of records because everything we need can be accessed electronically?

Don't know 4%

Hard copies are crucial

76%

19%

No need for hard copies
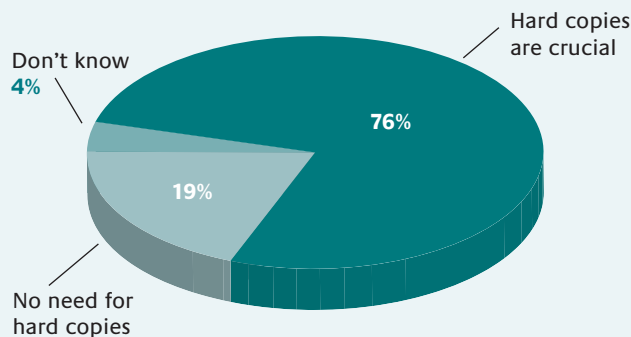
Books Are Better for Pleasure Reading

For each of the following statements, do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

When it comes to reading for pleasure, something electronic or digital can never replace the joy of a held book

AGREE 63% 23%

DISAGREE 7% 5%

■ STRONGLY ■ SOMEWHAT

Shhh: And Libraries are Places for Quiet and Learning

The libraries are an important, quiet oasis from fast-paced, stressful lives

AGREE 55% 34%

DISAGREE 7% 1%

■ STRONGLY ■ SOMEWHAT
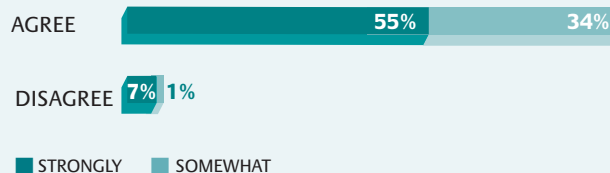
The Internet's a great tool, but especially for young kids, I don't think anything can replace having that book in your hand. The Dr. Seuss book, the pop-up book, all these wonderful books. Even as a young adult, to lay in bed, curled up with a book, that has nothing to do with the computer. It's a great experience that can't be duplicated.
—*Male, Providence*

I kind of like having things just written down because I know there have been certain times I could swear — like you read something and then you go back and you say, "Something has changed." If all media was completely just on the Internet and, say, for whatever reason, that someone just wanted to say, "We were wrong. We're changing everything" — if it's never written down, there's really no way to prove it ever existed before.
—*Male, Phoenix*

Many focus group participants seemed troubled by the notion of an "all electronic" library. Love of the handheld book and fear of lost records were the two most common expressions of their concern with our increasingly electronic world. In fact, respondents often spoke about the need to preserve information records in print so that they are not easily alterable. Many seemed to value the physical experience of having a book in hand. They also appreciated libraries' ability to offer a broad range of books without charge to people from all walks of life.

I go to the Internet every day, but I also pick up my book and read myself to sleep. It's a different type of escape for me. It's a different type of experience.
—*Male, Louisville*

Results from the survey confirm the public's preference for the hard-copy approach and their unease with a totally digital library. Almost 8 in 10 Americans say that libraries play a crucial role in preserving permanent and unalterable records. Fewer than 2 in 10 members of the public say there is no longer a need for hard copies in print because everything we need can be accessed electronically.

Interestingly, individuals with higher incomes are even more likely to say that preserving print copies is necessary. Eighty-five percent of individuals with an annual household income of more than $75,000 say that hard copies are crucial, while 67 percent of individuals with household incomes of less than $25,000 make this point.

The quantitative survey results support comments from the focus groups on another key point. More than 8 in 10 Americans say that when it comes to reading for pleasure, something digital or electronic can never replace the joy of a handheld book, with more than 6 in 10 people saying they feel this strongly.

As one man put it:

> When you pick up the book, a physical book as opposed to looking at a screen and seeing the readout on the screen, you're actually learning in a slightly different way. When you pick up a pen or a pencil and you write something out, it's different than when you just do this [miming typing]. It exercises just that different part of your brain. All of that helps educate people.
> —*Male, Providence*

Americans do not view the library as a place of imposing silence. Rather, most seem to relish the idea of having some sort of sanctuary of calm and quiet in a noisy, multitasking world. More than 8 in 10 Americans agree that libraries provide an important, quiet oasis from fast-paced, stressful lives, with over half saying they agree strongly on this point. Nearly 7 in 10 say libraries are one of the few places where kids can learn quiet concentration in a hyperactive world.

"That's one of the reasons I take my kids to the library," one man in Phoenix told us, "…to get them away from the TV, the computer games and everything. It's a time for me to get some peace and quiet. It's a time for them to get some peace and quiet, too, to learn how to be quiet."
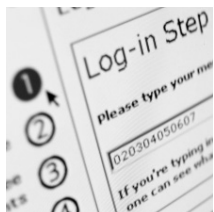
The Public Believes That Computers and Internet Access are Important, Too

While people value libraries' traditional services, they also value and appreciate Internet and computer access in libraries. Two-thirds of Americans say that having enough computers and online services for people should be a high priority for their local library. Seven in 10 favor wiring libraries so that those who might not be able to afford computers in their home can learn computer skills and get online.

There is little question that a majority of the public considers having computers and Internet access in libraries essential, and large numbers of Americans also want libraries to provide other multimedia resources. Almost two-thirds of Americans say having enough computers and online services for the people who want to use them should be a high priority for libraries. Over half consider good multimedia collections, including CDs, DVDs and videos, a high priority as well.

Yes, They Should Have Computers, Too

% who say the following should be a high priority for their local public library:

64%	Having enough computers and online services for the people who want to use them
55%	Good multimedia collections (CDs/books on tape/DVDs/Videos)
48%	Offering access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet, so they can be accessed from home or at work
45%	Providing wireless Internet access inside the library

There are also broad levels of support for the idea that libraries should be a primary means to make computer and Internet access available to everyone. Americans are three times as likely to support the wiring of libraries and schools in order to provide Internet access to people who do not have it as they are to support subsidizing the individual purchase of computers for low-income Americans.

A number of respondents in focus groups also commented about the importance of having computers and Internet access in libraries.

The Cyber-Café: The Public Sees Libraries as a Computer Access Point

As the Internet has developed, more middle-income people have gotten online compared to lower-income people. What should your local government do to address this issue?

Do nothing and wait for the price of computers and Internet access to fall enough so low-income Americans can afford to get online

11%

Support the wiring of libraries and schools so lower-income people can get on the Internet

63%

Subsidize the purchase of computers and Internet access for low-income Americans

18%

I think nowadays where everything is so computerized, a lot of people from low-income families don't have the money to buy a computer at home. [The library] is the one way they can go and have this access and to learn skills. Nowadays in many jobs you have to have computer skills. If these low-income kids don't have a way to go to the library or somewhere to learn these skills, they're automatically shut out of those better jobs. So there's this economic divide, and it just gets wider and wider.
—Female, Salinas

I don't go to the library very often, but when we do go — we've gone in the summer, and the kids will get books. If I'm going to go there, I'm going to do probably some kind of computer research or something. I think it's important that they have that.
—*Female, Louisville*

Press Any Key: Computer Users of Different Skill Levels Also Have Different Priorities for Their Libraries	LOWER COMPUTER SKILLS	ADVANCED COMPUTER SKILLS
% who say cafés would get people in libraries more	53%	66%
% who say it should be a high priority for libraries to have good multimedia collections	61%	48%

I think that we take our Internet access for granted. There are a lot of low-income families that don't have computers. When I was in college, we had a computer that was ancient. I didn't have Internet access. I always went to U of L's library. That was the only place I could go to be on the Internet, so I was always on the Internet there. I know at the public libraries they have computers with Internet access. I think that's important for those families that can't afford that.
—*Female, Louisville*

Currently, 52 percent of the public give their local libraries an "A" or a "B" for having enough computers — although only 26 percent give their local libraries an "A" on this score. Roughly a third of the public says it has visited the Internet site of a public library (35 percent).

Americans' broad commitment to having computers in libraries is noteworthy given that most Americans are already "wired" at home or at work. Most of the public (8 in 10) say that on any given day they have access to a computer at their workplace, school or home. Apparently, this does not preclude the use of the library's digital services, because one-third of those surveyed also say they have used the library for Internet access.

As part of the study, we also looked at computer skills and compared the results of "low-level users" (those with little or no computer skills) with those of "advanced users" (people who are able to use advanced features in most software packages). Perhaps surprisingly, the computer mavens, the technologically savvy types, are more likely to be heavy library users and to have a current library card (10 to 15 percentage points more, respectively) than are other Americans.

Perhaps because they are already well attuned to digital media, advanced computer users are less interested in libraries providing multimedia collections, but most like the idea of consumer services such as cafés (where they can bring their laptop).

Interestingly, people with few computer skills themselves were even more likely to say wiring libraries to increase universal access should be a high priority.

Different Groups in the Community See Libraries Through Different Lenses

Americans who regularly vote in local elections, belong to civic organizations and are active in their communities are more likely than other members of the public to be well-disposed toward libraries. These civically engaged Americans are more likely to have a library card, favor taxes to support libraries and give them good grades for their services.

Libraries mean different things to different people. Given the concerns we heard among leaders about the level of support for libraries (as documented in the next section) — and whether there are constituency groups that will step forward to fight for library services — the study took a closer look at several key demographic groups in order to understand who are the best potential library advocates. In this finding, we present some of the distinctive views of (1) people who are very involved in their communities; (2) younger people — that is, 18-to-25-year-olds; and (3) people who have lower levels of education. We also discuss the public's views on the relationship between libraries and immigrants. Although our survey was not large enough to report the views of immigrants separately, a number of leaders spoke about the important role libraries play in this area.

The "Community Soldiers"

There are people in every community who make things happen but do not necessarily hold any official post. These are the folks we refer to as "community soldiers" or "civically engaged," because no civic battle can be won without them. In this survey, they constituted approximately one-quarter of the sample. These civically engaged people say they "almost always vote in local elections." They also met one or more of the following characteristics: They volunteer via community organizations (7 in 10 volunteer more than one day a month); belong to civic organizations (almost 8 in 10) or donate money to charitable causes (more than 9 in 10). The survey found that of those who met these criteria, almost 80 percent are over the age of 40 and a quarter (25 percent) are retired. In addition, they are the most optimistic about their communities — nearly three-quarters of this group say that they believe their communities are headed "in the right direction."

The good news for libraries is that these citizens who nearly always vote and involve themselves in their communities are big fans of libraries. Nearly three-quarters have a local library card, compared with 59 percent of the rest of the survey sample. Six in 10 of the community soldiers would favor a tax increase to cover library needs, compared with about half of less engaged citizens. This group is also more likely to give their local libraries good grades for having materials in good condition, for being comfortable places to read and for having enough computers and online services for people who want them.

Soldiers at the Ready? Characteristics of the "Civically Engaged"	CIVICALLY ENGAGED	LESS ENGAGED CITIZENS
Favor a tax increase to cover necessary library operational costs	60%	50%
Give an "A" to library materials being in good condition and easy to find	48%	38%
Give an "A" to libraries for having comfortable places to read	54%	43%
Give an "A" to libraries for having enough computers and online services for people who want to use them	33%	24%
Have a local library card	74%	55%
Visit their local library six or more times per year	55%	38%

Young People Want Convenience and Technology from Libraries

	18–29 YRS.	30–49 YRS.	50–64 YRS.	65+ YRS.
% who say being open evenings and weekends should be a library priority	76%	78%	82%	51%
% who think consumer services like cafés would get people into libraries	73%	59%	53%	42%
% who have used the library for Internet access	45%	40%	27%	12%
% who think there are too few libraries in their communities	44%	38%	28%	21%
% who agree that libraries are geared too much toward children	36%	26%	22%	33%
% who say that the loss of libraries would affect only a few people in the community	34%	11%	10%	17%
% who give their libraries a "C/D/F" for having convenient hours	31%	18%	26%	15%

Although civically engaged citizens are more upbeat than others about libraries, they are no more likely to be concerned that libraries could be at risk of losing future tax support. While 45 percent think their local government has not provided enough money and assistance to the public libraries in their communities, 42 percent think they have, and 13 percent say they do not know. The bottom line: The people whom local politicians are most likely to listen to are also the most likely to be library supporters. But right now they are also likely to be unaware of possible threats to the funding of library services.

[Readers who are concerned with developing potential library advocates can review "citizen soldier" data for every question in this survey in the Complete Survey Results.]

The 18-to-29-Year-Olds

In contrast, younger people aged 18 to 25 are less likely to say libraries would be missed if they were closed. But there's evidence that libraries aren't meeting some of 18-to-29-year-olds' most important priorities — especially having convenient hours and Internet access.

Younger people tend to vote less frequently, but people who care about the future of libraries are very concerned about young people's views. We focused part of our analysis on younger adults (18 to 29) because this is the group raised in the Internet age, most immersed in the new technology and, theoretically,

more likely to see libraries as outdated institutions. In other words, this is the age group that may think libraries are less relevant to their lives — a view that could have serious consequences for libraries in the years to come.

Like the public at large, the majority of 18-to-29-year-olds say libraries are essential to the entire community. However, 1 in 3 people under 30 say a library's closure would affect only a few people in the community rather than affecting the entire community. But they are also the most likely group to have used the Internet at the library, and they are the group most likely to favor adding consumer services such as a café to the library.

The survey results suggest that there may be something of an access issue here — younger people are more likely to think there aren't enough libraries in their community, and they also complain more about inconvenient library hours.

The Less Well Educated

Americans with low levels of education have very positive views of libraries — including their value as one of the few places where people can learn in quiet concentration. This group is more likely to say there are too few libraries where they live.

There are some poignant findings from respondents who have less education and who hypothetically could benefit most from what libraries have to offer. Although the study shows that people with

Those with Less Education Value Library Services

	HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	SOME COLLEGE	COLLEGE GRADUATE
% who use libraries six or more times a year	30%	50%	55%
% who agree that libraries are one of the only places they can learn quiet concentration	74%	65%	61%
% who almost always get what they want when they go to the library	74%	67%	59%
% who think good multimedia collections should be a high priority for the library	61%	57%	46%
% who think providing wireless Internet should be a high priority for the library	52%	43%	36%
% who think there are too few libraries in their communities	42%	29%	25%

less education are less likely to be frequent library users, this group is more likely than others to recognize the need for and value of basic library services. Over 4 in 10 Americans with less education say there are too few libraries in their community. Over half say providing Internet access should be a high priority for libraries.

Immigrants

This survey sample is not large enough to report on immigrants' opinions on libraries overall or on immigrant services within libraries. But the issue emerged repeatedly in leadership interviews, and we did ask several questions of the general public about services for immigrants. For most of the survey sample, targeted library services for immigrants are not rated as high priorities. Only a quarter of the public believes "orienting immigrants to their communities" should be a high priority for local governments or libraries.

In focus groups, many participants doubted whether immigrants would use special library services even if they were provided for them. "I don't know, I don't see it," said one man from Louisville, Ky. "I mean, the information's there, it's open for them. Honestly, I don't think they use it." A woman from Providence, R.I., who was an immigrant herself also had

Support for Immigrant Services

Do you think public libraries should provide assistance to immigrants who are trying to learn our system and the English language so they can become part of the community, or do you think it costs taxpayers too much money to provide them with these services?

Public libraries should provide assistance to immigrants

Don't know

4%

71%

25%

It costs taxpayers too much money
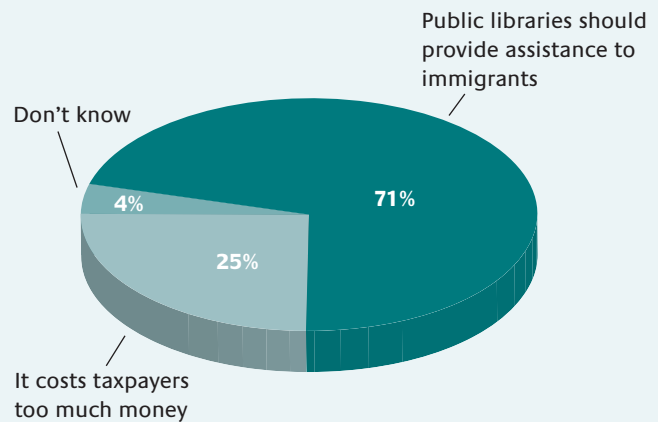
doubts: "When I came to live here, the library just wasn't a place I ever thought to use."

But even though specialized or targeted services for immigrants are not a top priority in the public's view, only a quarter of those questioned see libraries helping immigrants as a bad use of taxpayer money. More than 7 in 10 Americans say that "public libraries should provide assistance to immigrants" compared with 25 percent who believe "it costs taxpayers too much money."

Many of the local and national leaders we spoke with as part of this project were very concerned with finding ways to help immigrants integrate into the life of their new communities and saw libraries as one important means to that end. Some leaders suggested that providing immigrant services within public libraries should be a community priority, in part because the public lags in its understanding and support of this issue.

FINDING FIVE:

The Public Ranks Their Community Priorities

Since libraries operate within ever changing communities, the survey also explored people's views about their own local community. What do they believe works well there, what are the biggest problems and, by extension, where could libraries make a difference in their daily quality of life? Although most people like their own communities and believe they are heading in the right direction, majorities also say crime, especially juvenile crime, is one of the major problems where they live.

Current polls show that Americans are concerned that the nation as a whole is off on the wrong track, but the research here and elsewhere indicates that most Americans are reasonably happy with their own communities. In this survey, more than two-thirds say their community is on the right track.

Among the community challenges named by the public, concerns about crime lead almost immediately to concerns about poor-quality public education, illiteracy and lack of job skills and the problem of teenagers at loose ends. Not only are these major community problems, these are also areas people believe local government could do "a lot" about if they focused on these issues more.

In both focus groups and the telephone survey, we asked the public to tell us what concerned them most about their local communities. In an open-ended question, about 16 percent mentioned concerns related to local growth and development (many in the focus groups complained about traffic), 12 percent named problems related to crime, gangs and violence, while another 8 percent mentioned problems of drugs and alcohol abuse (for a combined 20 percent).

Respondents in focus groups also talked about crime and drugs:

I just watched the news. There just seems to be a lot of drug-related crimes in the news of late.
—Female, Louisville

I'd probably say crime [is the biggest problem]. You can't turn on the TV news. Every day somebody's got shot or there are some kids that [are] taking drugs or something like this.
— Male, Phoenix

Public Concerns About Their Communities

What do you think is the most important problem facing your local community today?

16%	Development/Growth/Transportation
12%	Crime/Gangs/Justice system/Violence
9%	National economy
8%	Drugs/alcohol
8%	Education
7%	Taxes
4%	Dissatisfaction with government/politics
4%	Youth/children issues
3%	Local economy
3%	Environment/pollution
2%	Poverty/homeless
2%	Housing
1%	Health care (cost/accessibility)
1%	Morality/ethics/family values
1%	Racism
1%	Immigration/illegal aliens
1%	Senior issues

> Where I live at there's a lot of crime and drugs, all kinds of stuff. I think that's a big problem right now.
> — *Male, Providence*

The focus group participants made a clear link between their concerns about crime and drugs and their focus on educational priorities. Many expressed the belief that the key to stemming the tide of crime and drugs in local communities is providing quality educational opportunities (early childhood and adult literacy alike) and better places for teenagers to find activities to keep them engaged and busy. Concerns about the relationship between drugs, crime and teenagers were especially salient among focus group participants.

> The way you're going to fight crime is to give the people a place to get the knowledge, and that diverts more crime than all the police in the world.
> —*Male, Phoenix*

> All the things that's going on with teenagers nowadays…like with gangs and things like that — I think that's a huge part of teenagers and what they do. I think if they had somewhere else they could go, and it would actually be fun for them, give them something that would kind of engage, give them something, give them kind of a challenge. I think that's very important.
> —*Female, Louisville*

> I believe that there should be a place where your kids can turn, whether it be in reading books instead of out on the street causing problems.
> —*Female, Phoenix*

Top Community Priorities

% who say the following should be a high priority for their community:

Providing quality public education
88%

Providing early childhood learning programs
74%

Having a safe place where teenagers can congregate
72%

Providing help for people who do not have basic reading skills
68%

Providing reliable medical information
67%

Making government information easily accessible
58%

Providing job search assistance
57%

Providing reliable public transportation
50%

Having convenient places for public events and meetings
35%

Administering public places where people can access information on the internet
29%

Orienting new immigrants to your community and America
25%

And these worries about children and youth were also borne out in another community question in the survey. When respondents were asked about the top priorities for their communities, education and services for teens topped the list.

Can Government Actually Do Anything About It?

In gauging the public's views of community problems and priorities, we sought to identify not only chief areas of concern to the public, but also those problems that the public believes local government has the power to address. We asked survey respondents if they believed their local government could do "a lot," "something" or "not much" to provide a variety of

Where Local Government Could Make a Difference

% who say local or state government can do a lot about the following:

64%	Providing quality public education
50%	Providing help for people who do not have basic reading skills
50%	Making government information easily accessible
49%	Having a safe place where teenagers can congregate
46%	Providing reliable public transportation
45%	Providing reliable medical information
44%	Providing job search assistance
42%	Providing understandable legal information
37%	Having convenient places for public events and meetings
33%	Administering public places where people can access information on the Internet
30%	Orienting new immigrants to your community and America

services. It is one thing to ask citizens to identify a serious problem; it's another if they believe it's truly possible to fix that problem. By asking about government services in this way, we were able to get a sense of the kinds of problems that citizens believe local government can realistically be expected to address. This is not to suggest that the public is necessarily confident that leaders will address the problems, only that the public holds government accountable in these areas. And again, services that deal with education top the list.

Are Libraries Poised to Help?

Among their local services and institutions, survey respondents give their communities the lowest grades on issues that could lead to crime or drug use — keeping teenagers out of trouble, providing good employment and job training services and orienting new immigrants to the community. As we noted earlier, of all the local institutions and services listed, libraries receive the best grades as a community asset. So it makes sense that libraries, so highly valued overall, would be poised to make significant contributions to addressing community challenges that have a close link to the basic library mission of serving children and youth and improving adult literacy (for more on this, see Finding Eight).

Section II

LEADERS ON LIBRARIES

FINDING SIX:

Leaders Say Libraries Are Indispensable But Vulnerable

In our interviews, opinion leaders in politics, business, education, libraries and other sectors underscore the importance of libraries now and in the future, but many also voiced anxieties about their future prospects.

As part of this research, Public Agenda conducted 34 in-depth interviews with national and community leaders in politics, business, education, public health and library services to share their perspectives about the future of public libraries in America. Despite the wide range of perspectives and divergent backgrounds of the leaders, a number of clear themes emerged from this series of in-depth interviews.*

For civic leaders, the challenge is mainly financial. How, they ask, can libraries compete for scarce taxpayer dollars if they are not more visible in the community and unless their advocates are more energetic and persuasive? Others raise more fundamental questions. They worry that libraries may be resting on their laurels and not sufficiently open to change. These leaders want libraries to take a more active role in helping to tackle broader challenges to the community like economic development, adult education, immigration and public health. Some see librarians as strong potential advocates for their organizations. However, many also say that library education needs to change so the librarians are better trained to be advocates and leaders of institutional growth and change.

From politicians to urban planners, we were told again and again that libraries are not only beloved institutions, they are also indispensable resources for addressing the challenges that communities face at the start of the 21st century. First Lady of Iowa and literacy advocate Christie Vilsack put it this way: "Public libraries preserve the past, inform the present and assure the future."

Several communities have thriving libraries showcasing services that are considered indispensable to both leaders and citizens of their communities. For example, for the last 15 years the Phoenix Public Library has enjoyed substantial support from both the public and policy makers, and the downtown library is generally recognized as the crown jewel of a larger system that is meeting the needs of a growing population and keeping pace with the changes wrought by the digital age. The success of the Phoenix library system appears to be the result of a confluence of factors, including stable and transparent city governance structures, innovative library governance structures, an active library advocacy community and productive channels of communication between the city government, the library and the public.

However, in many other communities libraries are in more vulnerable positions. Though they may be both beloved and important, too many libraries continue to slide down the list of funding priorities in communities across the country. For some, the problem is that libraries are not getting enough funding and tend to fall to the bottom of the list when local decision makers are preparing their budgets.

Other leaders raised more fundamental questions about whether libraries really are pulling their weight in terms of the community's needs and whether they are, in a sense, part of the problem themselves — unconscious of the need to reach out and not fully trained to deal with the current political environment.

Despite their concerns, many see specific areas where libraries could play an important community role. Some point to specific examples of where libraries had made themselves indispensable to communities facing major challenges:

The perception is that libraries are a place to check out books, and since our informational universe is no longer about books, the public and officials don't understand the new roles that libraries can and do play today.
—State Library Leader

Although many people have warm memories of the libraries they knew as children, the libraries of today must make the case for their continuing relevance in a world of Google, Amazon.com and megabookstores. According to these "thought leaders," the case is not necessarily a difficult one to make because "it's not a question of creating the content of the argument to be made, it's about expressing it…because the story to be told is a great one." (Michael Morand, New Haven Public Library) Though the argument may be an easy one to make, it is not self-evident, and therefore it must be actively articulated in ways that resonate with decision makers and the public alike.

The perception is that libraries are a luxury — they are the products of a prosperous society. We need to invert that idea and explain that the reason we are a prosperous society is because of libraries.
—*State Library Leader*

[From a business perspective,] the difficult question is how do you account for those things that a library does that nobody else can do, that don't translate into an immediate economic value? You want to find a way to talk about these things in ways that make it possible to compete for tax dollars…the library's business is to create social capital, and there are ways of talking about that.
—*Steve Lydenberg, Chief Financial Officer, Domini Funds*

A local business leader in Louisville, Ky., was more pointed in asking libraries to make their cases in ways that resonate with the community.

Why are we talking about saving libraries? Who cares? Talk to me about what this community needs, and maybe libraries are in the answer… but "libraries" by themselves don't matter to me… Don't tell me about a better-tasting brussels sprout. I've already decided that I don't want it. Instead, libraries need to show how they serve a community need that cannot be provided anywhere else.
—*Chamber of Commerce Member and CEO, Louisville*

One of the main obstacles [to ongoing and adequate library support] is that legislatures, and even governors' offices and the White House, pay very little attention to libraries. It's a very low position on the priority list for things to be done. The value of libraries and their contributions are underestimated.

—Former President Jimmy Carter

In addition, many leaders believe librarians might be idealistic and at times too high-minded. They feel that librarians must be more pragmatic in their approach if they're going to make the necessary alliances to thrive in the current atmosphere of fiscal and budgetary restraint.

The people working in libraries find the profit motive repugnant — and reject people who are motivated by anything other than the kindness of their hearts.
—*David Pointon, Government and Industry Relations Manager, 3M*

When asked about the future of public libraries, many of the leaders we spoke with suggested that libraries must make their cases by engaging more actively in the life of their communities. Communities have real needs that libraries may be uniquely equipped to address, and now is the time to shine a spotlight on that underappreciated potential of the library.

Libraries have been around for so long, they're taken for granted. It's important to make sure that a resource that's been around for so long isn't so completely taken for granted that it's not considered a part of the conversation on economic development or early childhood education or whatever the community topic is. The library should be part of every discussion that has to do with community collaboration… If you have a public library, you have a focal point for the community.
—*Christie Vilsack, First Lady, Iowa*

Community Information Center in the Digital Age

Many leaders also thought that libraries could become the central place where people can find the information they need to cope with a changing world. Some said that libraries have a unique opportunity to act as information brokers in a fast-changing world. Adult literacy programs, job training, small-business start-ups and community development programs were all cited as opportunities for libraries to help communities adapt to change. Libraries are also evolving into a point of access for government information and services, said the leaders we interviewed. Many government institutions are no longer paying to print forms, making the forms available online instead — and sending more people to their local library to find and print out those forms.

Stand-alone, walled-in institutions where you go for discrete services is starting to be redefined… In [one town], they're talking about making the library the hub for a lot of other services. It would be the library, literary center, transportation center, historical society, senior center, meeting rooms for lease for local hotels [hosting conferences], etc.… [We] need to think about the evolution of institutions and service and how libraries play into this.
— *Jeffrey Scherer, Library Architect*

A Resource for Those Who Have the Least

The leaders we interviewed had numerous examples of the kinds of problems libraries can tackle. Since libraries are already skilled at reaching underserved populations, many leaders thought they could be effective at bridging the "digital divide" and providing key services to immigrants:

[Our] growing and extremely diverse immigrant population and a shifting industrial base that will require retraining a workforce to change with the times suggests that there's a big role for the library to play.
—*Kentucky Mayor*

Libraries as the "Canary in the Coal Mine" for Communities

When communities are having financial trouble, their libraries suffer as well. Ironically, this can highlight the profound underlying value of library services.

As in Salinas, deteriorating libraries may be a symptom of a struggling community. As with the proverbial canary in the coal mine, there is a correlation between the perception of the health of a local community's economy and the health of its public libraries.

There's a weird irony in that when the demand is the heaviest, is when the least amount of money is available to do something about it. We try to help communities to understand that when things are good, now's the time for planning, thinking, funding.
—*Jeffrey Scherer, Library Architect*

Our quantitative public survey showed that people who believe their libraries are inadequately funded are also more likely to complain about other services their communities provide — for example, public transportation and well-maintained streets. This group is also unhappy with the number of libraries in their areas and give lower grades to their communities for maintaining well-run libraries. Interestingly, a majority of this group still believes the libraries are doing a good job with the resources available (63 percent give their communities an "A" or a "B" for maintaining well-run libraries).

The survey found that people who see their community libraries as underfunded are especially interested in having libraries provide job search assistance and make government information more accessible. It appears that communities with the greatest desire for these additional services are the ones with libraries that may not be able to support them.

When Libraries are Well-Funded, They Are Perceived to Be Running Well

% of those surveyed who say:

Their local community deserves an "A" for maintaining well-run libraries
- 52%
- 33%

Their local library is doing an "excellent/good" job
- 87%
- 68%

There are too few libraries in their communities
- 20%
- 50%

Job search assistance should be a high priority for their communities
- 46%
- 58%

Easily accessible government information should be a high priority for their communities
- 52%
- 61%

■ = Those who think the local government has provided enough money and assistance to the public libraries in their local community
■ = Those who think libraries are under-funded

The "Go to" Place

Some leaders also named public health as an area where library services could better inform and educate Americans. According to public health expert Rima Rudd (Harvard School of Public Health), reading comprehension is a problem for a majority of Americans, particularly when it comes to understanding written health information:

> There is a mismatch between the reading level of [health information] materials and the reading skills of most U.S. adults…and there are real links between literacy skills and health outcomes, especially when it comes to managing common but complex illnesses like diabetes.

Another example of library/community integration is the Civic Ventures "Next Chapter" initiative. This initiative is geared toward providing a wide range of resources to people who are transitioning from their work to retirement and are looking for opportunities to become involved in their communities.

> When we started looking for community partners [for the "Next Chapter" initiative], libraries seemed to be the natural [choice]. In one library, they now have trained navigators who volunteer to staff a hub called the "Dedicated Space" with all these resources about jobs, service, retirement, financial planning, housing, relationships — all of the things that have to do with this stage of life.
> —*Judy Goggin, Civic Ventures*

Governance

Many of the leaders we spoke with emphasized the need for libraries to become innovators in rethinking organizational structure, marketing and advocacy. According to library leaders and designers alike, efforts in these directions are crucial for creating the conditions for the kind of community integration required in the 21st century.

For example, some library systems have used productive relationships with local government to establish the library as an independent entity, apart from parks and recreation. This approach allows these libraries to become a separate line item in the city budget, creating greater focus for ongoing public support. Some cities have gone as far as directly linking library governance structures to local government.

In St. Paul, Minn., for example, the city council also serves as the library board. By taking direct responsibility, St. Paul's council has been able to give greater visibility to the library and provide a greater institutional focus for ongoing public support. As library board chair and city council member Pat Harris said:

> The advantage of the [city council/library board merger] structure is twofold: First, the system provides a focal point of knowledge for decision makers because there's a greater opportunity for elected officials to learn about the library system. Second, because the library is separate from other city services, it's a separate line item in the budget. That focal point allows our budget process to be focused less on politics.

Although St. Paul is somewhat unique in its governance decision to merge its library board with its city council, the importance of establishing productive relationships between the library and local government is difficult to overestimate.

Many of the business leaders we spoke to said that in addition to these changes in governance, libraries need to begin to think of themselves more as businesses and to change their management approach accordingly. The implication here is that librarians may think of libraries as universally valued institutions that require little ongoing justification. But with the rise of Google, Amazon.com and the megabookstores, libraries must make the case for their continuing relevance. In addition to maintaining valued traditional services, these leaders believe that a more business-minded approach to services and governance might help libraries position themselves as more vital public institutions.

Libraries Are Still Relevant in a Digital Age

In today's world, with Internet access, online databases and large booksellers such as Amazon.com, Borders or Barnes & Noble, do you think libraries have become more, less or the same in importance to their communities?

The same — 37%
Less — 36%
More — 24%
Don't know — 3%
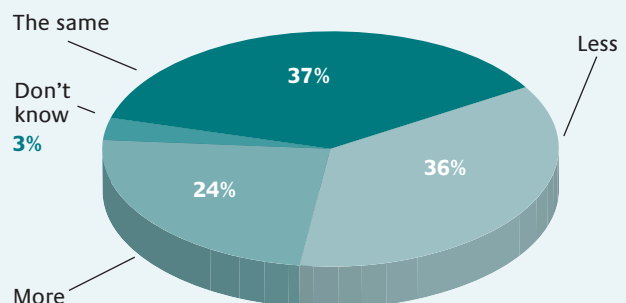
The public shares some of this concern with community leaders. While 61 percent say that today's "Internet world" makes libraries just as important or more important, 36 percent say libraries are less important in today's digital age.

Make Libraries Visible and Accessible

Many leaders suggest that libraries must work harder to market and advertise their services.

> [A lack of] public relations is the biggest obstacle to reinventing the library — the incredible potential isn't being marketed. Think about how much money Coke puts into selling sugar water, and it doesn't do anything positive. Think about what a library can do.
> —*Henry Myerberg, Architect, Rockwell Group*

Library designers and urban planners also emphasize the need for physical integration of the library into the life of the community. Although it might be a controversial point in some communities, these community designers were emphatic that the notion of the monumental library, architecturally imposing but separate from the flow of the town, may actually impede its relevance. One architect did add that many of the newer libraries were more "thoughtful fits."

> The three most important things about libraries are location, location, location. Libraries must be seen as dynamic community resources and tools for urban renewal. They must focus on adjacencies and become connected to other development.
> —*Henry Myerberg*

Librarian (and Library Friends), "Help Thyself"

Leaders consistently pointed to librarians as the single most valuable yet poorly used resource for potentially advocating for libraries' value in the life in our communities. Some praised librarians for their abilities to multitask, others for their efforts with children. First Lady Vilsack pointed out:

> There are special challenges and special rewards for librarians in rural areas: They're viewed as heroes in the smallest communities because they alone make Internet access possible.

Some leaders admired the role librarians have played raising questions about privacy and the U.S. Patriot Act, which allowed investigators to use library records in terrorism probes. And in less overtly political terms, librarians are treasured in small towns.

Interviews with national leaders repeatedly indicated that it may be time to expand and/or rethink the education and training of librarians. Although the skills emphasized in traditional Master of Library Science programs are good, they said, these programs aren't fully addressing current political realities regarding advocacy, governance and community integration. Some said the economics of the profession must also be considered, and several leaders strongly emphasized that there are few professions that pay so poorly yet require an advanced degree.

> The librarians have to be more evocative and demanding in putting their interests on the agenda, because if you went down a list of priorities for the average teacher's organization, the NEA or whatever, I would guess that libraries would almost be unmentioned. If the libraries just played a small role in the list of priorities, it's certainly not equal to what they're actually worth, but that's something that I think would pay rich dividends.
> —*Former President Jimmy Carter*

Our interviews suggested that updating library science curricula, providing higher salaries and creating the conditions for more productive relationships with local leaders would allow librarians to become more effective advocates for their institution. Some suggest that librarians are beginning to understand the need for a more external focus on the role of the library in the life of the community.

> Libraries and librarians are beginning to understand their potential for the role they can play as community partners and community leaders, which is a growing phenomenon. Librarians were never really participating that way before.
> —*Judy Goggin, Civic Ventures*

Another theme that came out strongly in our interviews with leaders was that the difference between a thriving library and a struggling one often is a strong Friends of the Library network, where citizens and librarians can work together to lobby for topflight services. Phoenix and St. Paul were frequently mentioned as cities where strong Friends of the Library organizations had made a major contribution.

Section III

WHAT'S NEXT FOR LIBRARIES?

Section III explores the future of libraries based on results from the quantitative public survey and focus groups, as well as insights from the leadership interviews. It tackles two questions arising from the research: (1) Given the value Americans place on libraries, would they be willing to pay more for the costs of maintaining and keeping them viable? Is the support people voice for libraries just lip service, or are people willing to put their money and personal time on the line? (2) Are there other missions libraries should take on to increase their relevance and vitality to today's communities?

There Is Strong Potential Support Among the Public for Adequate Library Funding

There are strong indications in the survey that the public would endorse more financial support for libraries if library leadership reached out and nurtured that potential support. Because most Americans believe libraries use tax resources wisely, libraries do not have to fight the "cut the waste first" attitudes the public brings to so many issues of public funding. It is also striking that the public strongly prefers added taxes to cutting library services or hours in the event of a funding shortfall.

The American public feels strongly that something important would be lost if libraries closed, and nearly two-thirds strongly agree that libraries are essential for maintaining a productive community. But as stated earlier, we do not see that many perceive a funding crisis for libraries.

Yet local leaders, particularly local politicians and business leaders, consistently expressed the view that tax increases are never seen as a favorable option by citizens, even when it comes to improving community services. Although that may or may not be a reality at the ballot box, on the telephone our survey found that more than half of the public (and more than 6 in 10 influential citizens) would favor a tax increase to cover additional funds the library might need. Raising taxes was, in fact, a more popular notion than cutting back library hours or charging for library services.

One reason for this rather surprising finding is that a majority of people believe the library uses its tax based resources wisely. This is true even among nonusers. Nearly 6 in 10 nonusers say they believe libraries use their funds wisely — while more than three-quarters of library users believe libraries spend tax dollars well.

Although nonuser support was somewhat less enthusiastic for an increase in local taxes to support libraries, nearly half of the nonusers say they would favor a tax increase to provide additional support to local libraries. Moreover, a solid majority (7 in 10 users, 6 in 10 nonusers) opposes charging for library services, and an overwhelming majority is opposed to cutting back library hours.
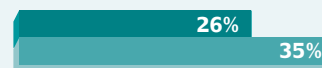
Even People Who Rarely or Never Use Libraries Support Raising Taxes Over Other Money-Saving Measures to Help Libraries

% who would favor the following if local libraries need additional funds to continue operation:

Taxes being increased to cover the necessary costs
- 59%
- 47%
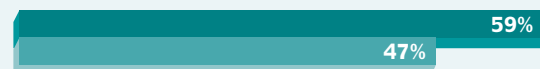
The library charging the people who use it
- 26%
- 35%

The library reducing the services that it offers the public
- 17%
- 23%

■ LIBRARY USER   ■ LIBRARY NON-USER

Nonusers and infrequent users in the focus groups expressed support for the library as an institution because of their belief that our society must provide opportunities for the underserved, particularly children.

> Being a fiscal conservative, yet being a social liberal, I truly believe that it is incumbent upon us, because of the importance of education, to provide for those people, through public funding, that place where they can go get that. Not all of them can go to Borders.
> —*Male, Phoenix*

The Public Believes Libraries Use Their Money Well, Regardless of Whether They've Seen it for Themselves

Do you believe that libraries use their money well, or do they spend it on the wrong things?

Library User

- Use money well: 78%
- Misspend: 7%
- Don't know: 14%

Library Non-User

- Use money well: 66%
- Misspend: 7%
- Don't know: 27%
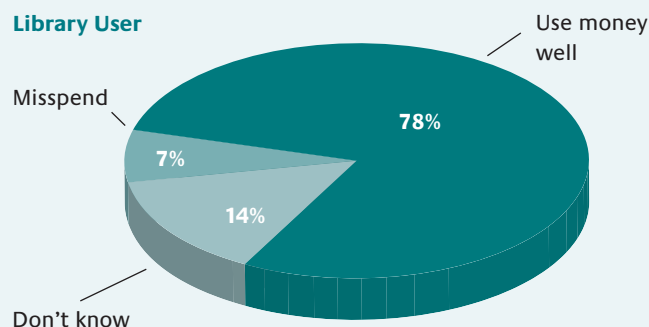
The caveat, however, is that libraries need to nurture and involve their constituencies early; once libraries begin to cut back on services and "let things go," much potential support could be lost.

Back when I was growing up, we didn't have money. There wasn't any bookstores, but there was always a library... Maybe everybody has Internet, but there's kids that don't. [The library] is where they can actually go and feel like, "I'm like everyone else. I can fit in. My mom can't afford to buy me a $4 book, but I can check out 10 for free."
—*Female, Phoenix*

So while public support for adequate library funding is certainly not guaranteed — given the realities of local politics, low voter turnout among some groups and other pressing needs in communities — the findings here suggest that local politicians who might consider cutting library services should be mindful of the strong sentiment for library support among key voter segments.

FINDING EIGHT:
Libraries Have Potential to Do Even More

The research among the public and opinion leaders suggests four areas where libraries could play valuable community roles — roles that would likely endear them even more to civic leadership and public alike. The four areas are (1) providing stronger services for teens; (2) helping address illiteracy and poor reading skills among adults; (3) providing ready access to information about government services, including making public documents and forms quickly and easily available; and (4) providing greater access to computers. The study shows that some other important areas — helping on jobs and services for immigrants — are of interest mainly to leaders.

Public Agenda's interviews with nearly three dozen national and community leaders and this in-depth survey of the American public highlighted four specific opportunities for public libraries to integrate themselves more fully into the life of their communities and position themselves as positive "community players." Providing places for teens to meet and learn, helping improve adult reading skills, providing access to government information and services and offering greater access to computers are all areas where the public believes its local community's performance tends to fall short. By developing programming and outreach in these areas, libraries could help address these important needs, fill critical gaps and be seen as a more vital and essential institution in the communities they serve. Many libraries are already filling these crucial gaps, but public awareness of the library role in each area is low.

In identifying these potential community action areas for libraries, Public Agenda used several key criteria:

■ Each area reflects Americans' priorities for urgent action in their own community.
■ Each is an area where people think government could be more effective but where people say current performance is relatively poor.
■ Each is an area where people say libraries could indeed play a positive role.

Coincidentally, these were all areas that local and national leadership also consider priorities for libraries. According to the Public Agenda research, action here could enhance the sense that libraries are playing a strong role in addressing serious community problems — a point that some leaders felt was lacking today. At the same time, taking on these challenges and communicating about what is being done could help libraries raise their profile, making them more useful and relevant with a broader base of support in the community.
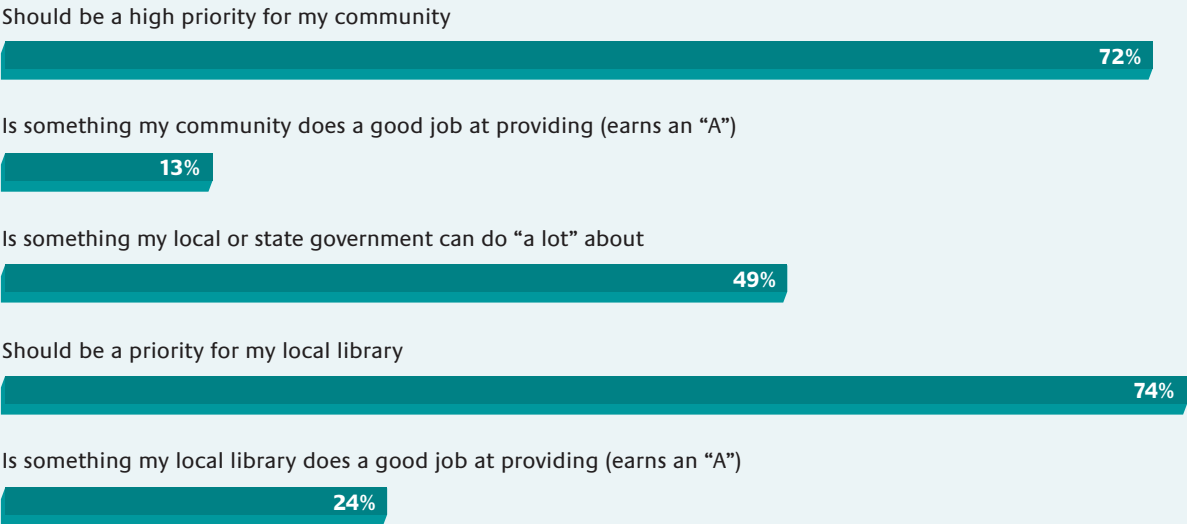
1. A Place for Teen Activities

This first area of opportunity deals with the broad public concern about "safe spaces" for teens. As we saw in the community needs profile (in Finding Five), this is a high priority (72 percent) and a major concern among citizens. It is also one area about which the public believes government can and should "do something." Although the need is there, the public gives local government's current performance on this measure poor ratings (only 13 percent grade it an "A"). Even more important, the public sees providing a place for teens to congregate as a high priority for libraries (74 percent), with only 1 in 4 currently grading libraries with an "A" in providing this service. This is a classic gap that libraries could fill, as we heard from many comments in the focus groups. Nationwide, there are also some excellent examples of quality teen programming done very successfully, as we heard about in both focus groups and leadership interviews.

The biggest problem is kids in trouble. I don't think they're getting the help that they need from the [community] organizations.
—*Male, Providence*

When you say crime, I also do not feel that there are enough programs out there that are sponsored for teens. I think that in itself will kind of filter over to the crime because sometimes you have idle minds, idle hands, something is bound to occur.
—*Female, Providence*

A Safe Place for Teenagers

Should be a high priority for my community

72%

Is something my community does a good job at providing (earns an "A")

13%

Is something my local or state government can do "a lot" about

49%

Should be a priority for my local library

74%

Is something my local library does a good job at providing (earns an "A")

24%

2. A Place Where Adults Can Improve Their Reading Skills

A review of the survey data about adult literacy and workforce development shows a clear opportunity for synergy and community improvement. More than half of the public believes communities should be placing a high priority on providing job search assistance, and almost as many believe this should be a high priority for public libraries. About half believe their local government could and should do more to stimulate progress and create opportunities in this area. But only 9 percent give their communities an "A" for creating economic opportunity. Local leaders should take note and think seriously about the role that libraries can play in this area.

Although many communities struggle with workforce development and employment opportunities in a rapidly changing economic climate, rural areas are especially vulnerable to these sorts of economic challenges:

> In a time when we're constantly needing to retrain ourselves for the jobs of the 21st century, the library provides access to the kinds of tools needed for economic development… particularly true in smaller towns like we have in Iowa.
> —*Christie Vilsack, First Lady, Iowa*

Among the public at large, the data are especially striking when it comes to grading adult literacy programs, the cornerstone of all workforce development efforts. Currently, grades for these community services are rated exceptionally low (15 percent give an "A"), but half the sample thinks government could do "a lot" about the problem. This suggests a genuine opportunity for libraries to become a major part of "the solution" for a serious community need.

Leaders too often commented on the literacy challenge, especially as it relates to immigrant populations.

> Siting libraries according to literacy needs should be a priority, but it's not usually those places that have a lot of political muscle. The places that most need libraries — poor urban areas — are least likely to have the tools and resources to advocate successfully.
> — *Former Phoenix Superintendent of Public Instruction*

Providing Literacy and Reading Programs for Adults

Should be a high priority for my community

68%

Is something my community does a good job at providing (earns an "A")

15%

Is something my local or state government can do "a lot" about

50%

Should be a priority for my local library

68%

Is something my local library does a good job at providing (earns an "A")

17%
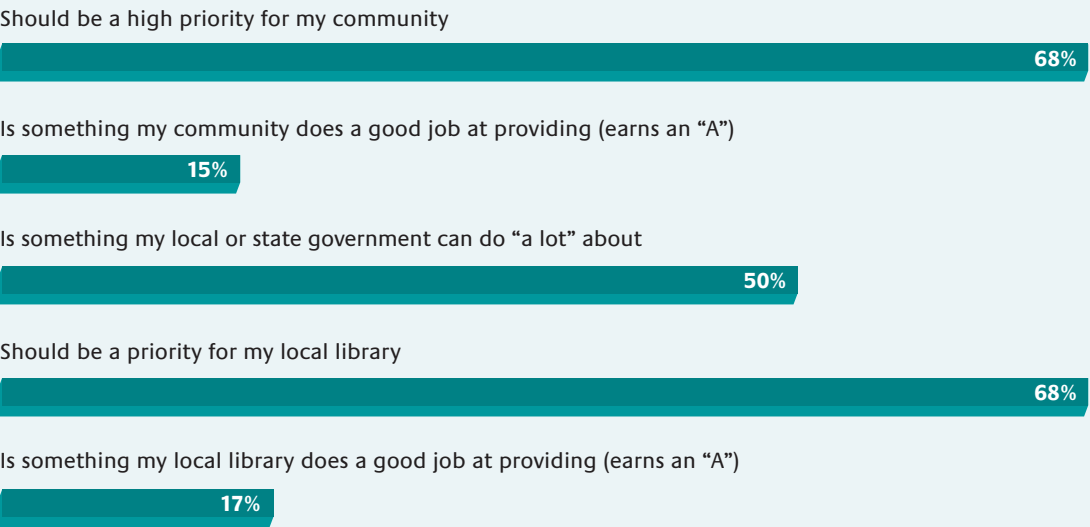
3. A Place That Assures Access to Government Information and Services

A third opportunity for libraries to fill a gap in important community needs is as a "hub" for improved access to government information and services. Again, it is an issue that is highly salient in the public's mind and where it holds local governments accountable — half the respondents say that the government can do "a lot" about this — and it should be a high priority (58 percent). Even more people (64 percent) think it should be a major priority for libraries.

One of the library architects we spoke with focused on the evolution of the library as a point of access to government information and services and as a new "town square."

The people in [this] community don't have computers, so these people have to go to libraries to fill out the paper-work. [Not having printed government forms is] supposed to save money, but they're shifting the burden to other institutions — libraries in this case. It's not like the Department of Health and Human Services is giving money to libraries to help with the cost of providing these computer and print services.… It's a financial shell game.
—Jeffrey Scherer, Library Architect

Making Government Forms and Information Easily Accessible

Should be a high priority for my community

58%

Is something my local or state government can do a "a lot" about

50%

Should be a priority for my local library

64%

Is something my local library does a good job at providing (earns an "A")

23%
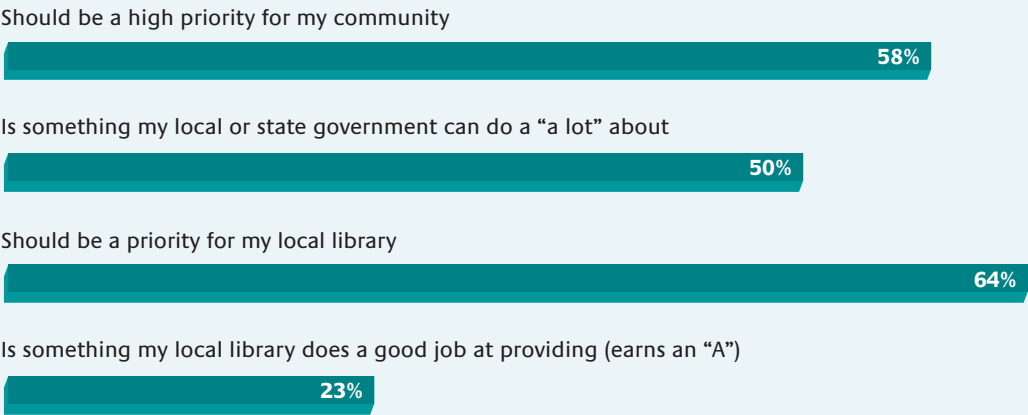
4. A Place That Will Always Provide Public Access Computing

Finally, three in ten Americans believe it is very important for communities to offer public access to computers and the Internet (29 percent say it is a high priority), but only 17 percent give their communities a grade of "A" for providing this service. On the other hand, the public sees providing computer access as a high priority for libraries (64 percent), but only a quarter believe their library is currently doing a good job.

> We provide access to online resources that people would have to pay for if they accessed them from home, we teach computer literacy classes, we make the case for libraries as spaces for Internet access and help with navigating information... We have lines to use the computers in our libraries, because there are all kinds of people who don't otherwise have access. There just aren't other institutions that do what we do, providing free and full access to every member of the community regardless of income or race.
> — *Phoenix Friends of the Library Organizer*

The public is not yet calling for libraries to work more assertively in these areas; however, many leaders see an opportunity for a much more active role on these fronts for libraries.

In summary, there are four areas — teen services, reading skills for adults, government "hub" provider and Internet access — that are ideal opportunities for greater emphasis in library services. They are major concerns among both leaders and citizens and crucial community needs, and government is held responsible for addressing them. However, current government performance is rated rather poorly on these issues, opening up ideal opportunities for libraries to help close these gaps and position themselves as even more vital service providers to the citizens of their communities.

Providing Public Access to Computers and the Internet

Should be a high priority for my community
29%

Is something my community does a good job at providing (earns an 'A')
17%

Is something my local or state government can do 'a lot' about
33%

Should be a priority for my local library
64%

Is something my local library does a good job at providing (earns an 'A')
26%

Community Profiles

Voices from **Louisville, Ky.**

In Context: Louisville is the 16th largest city in the nation, with just over 1 million people in the metropolitan area. It has struggled over the years with racial and class issues, but it is working hard to develop a more highly educated workforce to attract new business and economic interests. A merger with surrounding county interests has greatly changed city governance and has been an important new development supporting these efforts.

The State of the Libraries: The Louisville Free Public Library is now a subsystem of the newly combined city/county government. The combination of city and county governments happened relatively recently, so this will likely strengthen support of the city's libraries from the wealthier suburbs. The library buildings in Louisville proper have needed additional financial support over the years to try to meet Kentucky's minimum standards for library adequacy, so these are promising developments for the libraries in Louisville.

Over the years, the region's agricultural and light-manufacturing history led to lower educational outcomes than comparably sized cities. As one business leader characterized it, "We don't have the workforce to attract businesses. We're not viewed as a community of educated people, and the tax base is eroding as a result." In addition, a growing and extremely diverse immigrant population and a shifting industrial base have many leaders turning their attention to building a more effective and better-trained workforce.

I love to read. I think the library is a great thing for kids to have for their imaginations, and be able, whether you're rich or poor, or whatever, to have an escape.

—Female, Louisville

How They Got There: When talking with local leaders about the challenges facing Louisville, two related themes emerged. First, Louisville faces a pressing need for the development of a more highly educated workforce if it is to thrive under current economic conditions. Second, long-standing social tensions factor into many of the current problems in Louisville generally. Both themes played key roles in leaders' views regarding the challenges and opportunities facing the Louisville Public Library system.

Louisville Public Libraries FAST FACTS:

- The western branch was the nation's first public library fully staffed and managed by and for African-Americans.

- The system has 17 locations serving city and suburban communities.

- Serves the nation's 16th largest city, where more than 71 languages are spoken in the public schools

- Signature programs: extensive cultural programming including arts, education and public affairs programming

- The library is an agency of the metropolitan Louisville government, funded by the city. In 2006, the mayor allocated $2 million to purchase land for three new regional libraries.

I believe in the library. When a child is very young and teenaged, we're supposed to stimulate the mind and get them focused on being productive. When a child is young, they're very impressionable, they're eager to learn. If you get their attention long enough, you have to get their attention span long enough to get them to learn, challenge them a little bit.

—Male, Louisville

Louisville's governance structure is made up primarily of a strong mayor and a large elected city council. To address the socioeconomic and geographic tensions that have historically pitted suburban whites against urban blacks in Louisville, these local decision makers fought for and finally succeeded in merging the city and county governments.

Outlook for the Future: Everyone we interviewed, from the mayor to the business community to the library foundation, told us that the public library system has a crucial and indispensable role to play in helping Louisville tap into the opportunity to build a stronger education base as well as a more competitive workforce. The need to re-imagine the public library for the 21st century exists in all our

	Local Revenue Per Capita	State Revenue Per Capita	Total Revenue Per Capita	Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
National Average	$26.44	$2.92	$34.62	$5,351.00	$84,033.00
LOUISVILLE	$20.51	$0.71	$23.99	$349,157.00	$1,587,934.00

[We have a] growing and extremely diverse immigrant population and a shifting industrial base that will require retraining a workforce to change with the times… There's a big role for the library to play.

—*Louisville Mayor*

community profiles, but it is clear that each community must meet that need in specific ways.

In early 2006, the mayor announced that the metropolitan Louisville government would spend $2 million to purchase land for three new regional libraries, part of a master facilities plan adopted by the Library Advisory Commission — the citizen oversight board for the library charged with long-range planning and policy. The plan calls for a "complete reworking of the system, not just tinkering at the edges." Based on an inclusive public process involving more than 1,400 citizens, the plan sets forth options for major capital, programmatic, service and technological improvements to meet state standards and to meet the region's educational, informational and cultural needs into the future.

This profile demonstrates how one city is tackling the challenge of the 21st century. Local business leaders and library advocates in Louisville strongly agree that the main challenge facing the public library system is its ability to argue and demonstrate that it serves community needs that cannot be met elsewhere or by other institutions.

We need to think about how we can use the libraries as part of the training and retraining that needs to go on to either upgrade skills or change skills for a changing workforce and economic climate.

—*Louisville Leader*

Voices from **Phoenix, Ariz.**

In Context: Phoenix is a large and rapidly growing city of 1.4 million people and about 3 million in the metropolitan area. It is currently the fifth largest city in the United States, likely to surpass Chicago as the third largest city by 2020, and has a large and growing Hispanic population (34 percent).

The State of the Libraries:
The Phoenix Public Library system is, among our profiles, the exemplar for a successful library system. For the last 15 years, the Phoenix Public Library has enjoyed substantial support from both the public and policy makers, and the central library is generally recognized as the crown jewel of a larger system that is meeting the needs of a growing population and keeping pace with the changes wrought by the digital age.

The organizational structure of the Phoenix libraries is conducive to cooperation between the city manager, the city council, the mayor and the library. At the city level, there is a strong and stable city manager–based form of government that, in turn, has a long tradition of transparency and support for public input and cooperation with the city council. A strong Friends of the Library organization has been successful in advocating on behalf of public libraries and in keeping the library in the top third of essential city services.

The library has been getting better and better… The library here is a meeting space, it's readily accessible, it's an attractive, well-kept space, it's full of activities, book sales, exhibits and things like that. It's really great.

—Male, Phoenix

The system does face challenges. The state of Arizona provides considerably less financial support to libraries than many other states. The Phoenix Public Library also has the challenge of reaching out to diverse and far-flung communities. It is a continuing challenge to respond to a burgeoning metro area and the multilingual, multicultural, multigenerational needs of a changing population.

Phoenix Public Libraries FAST FACTS:

- Recipient of the DuPont Benedictus Award for Innovative Architectural Design (central library), as well as national awards to staff, including the "Library Journal" Librarian of the Year and "New York Times" Librarian of the Year.

- A system of 14 libraries, with 2 additional libraries coming soon.

- In Maricopa County, the county with the fastest-growing population in the nation.

- Signature programs: Teen Central, Lifelong Libraries (for older adults) and outreach to refugee and other multi-cultural populations.

- With below average financial support from taxes, the system relies on strong private fund-raising help from Friends of the Phoenix Public Library and the Phoenix Public Library Foundation.

There was all this discussion of the Internet making libraries obsolete, and we've proven that completely wrong, and we talk about libraries as community centers…We've really reinvented what the library is.

—Phoenix Leader

How They Got There: The success of the Phoenix Public Library system appears to be the result of a confluence of factors, including stable and transparent city governance structures, innovative library governance structures, an active library advocacy community and productive channels of communication between the city government, the library and the public.

The majority of library funding comes from the city, and the city budget is in turn based on sales tax, state shared revenue and fees for city services.

	Local Revenue Per Capita	State Revenue Per Capita	Total Revenue Per Capita	Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
National Average	$26.44	$2.92	$34.62	$5,351.00	$84,033.00
PHOENIX	$20.04	$0.06	$20.36	$216,800.00	$139,090.00

At the end of the 1980s, a bond was passed that included a large sum of money for the construction of a new central library, but by 1991 the economy in Phoenix had softened and the city was considering cutting the public library from the list of slated projects. In response, a handful of library advocates started the "SOS: Save Our System" grassroots campaign and flooded city hall with thousands of postcards calling for the library to remain on the slate. As a result of this campaign, the library project was restored and the Friends of the Library group became the spearhead organization for library advocacy in Phoenix.

I think [the library is] a deterrent to crime. One of the things, it's a safe haven, it gives kids an opportunity to go there. When I go to the library, there are a lot of kids there, on the computer, even doing a school project or something, and it's more supervised.

—Male, Phoenix

Although Friends of the Library is the lead organization in rallying public support for the library, the Phoenix Public Library Foundation was established to provide private streams of support to the library through fund-raising efforts and capital projects. The foundation is governed by a volunteer board of directors and has been remarkably successful in developing innovative approaches to garnering and maintaining support for the public library. Chief among these approaches is the use of a corporate model that relies on market research to aid in the development of library programs and a self-consciously constructed corporate culture focused on customer service.

We've better communicated to the elected officials and the business leaders the value of the library… We go to city leaders and say, "If you invest in libraries, you may not need as many police, and here are the kinds of community activities that are going on in the library system…" Ten years ago, saving the book budget was a big deal, because it was an easy thing to cut and it didn't seem like there was any political downside, but now [the city would] think twice before they threaten that because the cache of the library has grown.

—Phoenix Leader

Outlook for the Future: The Phoenix Public Library has benefited from creative programming, daring space design and the development of a range of partnerships. Part of the library's success has been its vision for public/private partnerships involving local foundations and many other community partners. Although the recent history of the Phoenix Public Library system has been shaped by unique circumstances, and in the context of an uncommonly cooperative and stable city governance structure, it is nonetheless a success story that may serve as a model for other communities struggling to inspire support for public libraries. In summary, the Phoenix Public Library system has a vibrant governance and support network that makes it well positioned for a future reflecting the strength of this growing, dynamic city.

Voices from **Providence, R.I.**

In Context: Providence is a midsize city of 173,000 people and about one million in the metropolitan area. The city was an industrial capital at the turn of the century, with textiles its primary industry. As manufacturers moved South for closer proximity to cotton production, costume jewelry manufacturers took over the old mill buildings. The city began to see a decline in the 1970s as manufacturing moved off-shore and unemployment rose. Newcomers constitute 52 percent of the city's residents, and school children speak over 60 different native languages.

The State of the Libraries: Last summer, the Providence Public Libraries cut hours at all 10 branches in response to the fifth straight year of level funding from the city. The libraries were also strongly criticized by members of the Providence City Council in 2004 when it cut 21 staff positions.

Unlike most private libraries that became public libraries during the Carnegie era, the Providence library system has remained a private institution since its founding in 1875. Although the system is known as the Providence Public Library, there is a private library board, and the library system is run by a nonprofit organization rather than by the city. While this governance structure is not uncommon, the structure has the effect of setting the library apart from the city's service-coordinating efforts. The library board has had a difficult relationship over the years with city government. Despite this, the library is recognized nationally for its innovations in early childhood literacy and family programs, teen services, outreach to newcomers and its efforts to meet the needs of the city's rapidly changing neighborhoods.

The library in my area, which is on Rochambeau [Avenue], is one of those beautiful libraries... because it's all remodeled now, and I love going there.

—*Female, Providence*

How They Got There: The city's tumultuous political past — a long history of corruption and misspent public funds — has generated private funding for the library which is administered and stewarded separate from public funds. Separate funding streams have been a source of friction between the city council and library board for decades and continue to impede a shared vision for the library.

Providence Public Libraries FAST FACTS:

- Winner, 2001 National Award for Library Service, from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

- Historic central library and nine neighborhood branches, each serving diverse cultural and ethnic communities.

- Working to provide an anchor for the acculturation of the community's immigrants, which make up 54 percent of the city's residents.

- Signature programs: Cradles to Crayons early childhood and family literacy program, TeenPOWer and LEAP (Libraries Enriching After-school Programs).

- Reports the highest percentage of funding from private sources (40 percent) of any public library in the country.

The library in my neighborhood at Washington Park has computers for kids. They can go do their homework after school, [those] who don't have a computer at home, who don't have the resources to do what they need to do.

—*Female, Providence*

Recently, the city council proposed an ordinance that would have changed the library governance structure to place more publicly appointed trustees on the library's board as a condition of the city appropriation. Also, the city and the library, through a formal planning process, are exploring creating education complexes or multi-use facilities to meet needs for library and school services that are accessible, efficient and community-based. Governance options, including increasing the number of public appointees on the library board or forming a separate entity to administer city services, are also being explored.

Outlook for the Future: From the perspective of city council members we spoke with, the library should be a public and transparent institution, because much of its funding comes from public sources. Because the state contracts with Providence Public Library as the

	Local Revenue Per Capita	State Revenue Per Capita	Total Revenue Per Capita	Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
National Average	$26.44	$2.92	$34.62	$5,351.00	$84,033.00
PROVIDENCE	$21.15	$11.10	$74.67	$266,870.00	$5,748,852.00

The organizational structure makes it hard for the library to be a part of the city services coordinating efforts.

—*Providence Leader*

Statewide Reference Resource Center, the library gets substantial funding from the state as well.

In many cities, Friends of the Library organizations serve as a crucial focal point for public input in library governance. In Providence, the Friends organizations do not have strong ties to library board members. The Friends organizations could be more effective in voicing wider public concerns if they developed a stronger, supporting relationship with the board.

I can walk to the library. It's relaxing for me. They have a beautiful reading room. I go because I can read there and I check out the books. If it's something that I do not want to buy, then I go to the library.

—*Female, Providence*

The Providence Public Library remains focused on programs and services to address the multitude of needs in the communities it serves. "What we're doing is working," says Providence Public Libraries director Dale Thompson. "Over 1 million people came through our doors last year. Our problem now is capacity." Proposed budget cuts have reopened the questions of funding and governance of the library system. While political tensions and upcoming elections have made it difficult for the library, the mayor and city council to resolve differences, the governance issues underscore the crucial importance that this issue has to the future funding outlook for a large urban library system such as the one in Providence.

Voices from **Salinas, Calif.**

In Context: Salinas is a midsize city of 151,060 people. It is famous for its agricultural output and for being the home of John Steinbeck. Salinas is home to a very large migrant worker population (50 percent of households speak a language other than English) and has a high poverty rate relative to the more affluent communities surrounding it on the Monterey Peninsula.

The State of the Libraries: A near shutdown of the public library forced this community to take a hard look at how much value it places on all community services, including libraries, and how they want to pay for them. After two different local ballot measures attempting to raise funds for city services failed to pass with voters in November 2004, the city council had drastically cut back on the number of hours local libraries were open. Despite public outcry, it appeared inevitable that all the public library branches would soon close their doors.

If you really inform people, they can understand why things happen and they'll vote to raise taxes to support the libraries. The polling data mapped directly onto the voting data — 60 percent said they support the libraries in the form of raising taxes, and 61 percent voted to raise the taxes.

—Salinas Leader

A strong advocacy campaign, the support of the local business community and significant media attention gave the library system another chance. Private donations provided a stopgap measure, keeping the libraries open but with greatly reduced hours. In November 2005, voters approved a tax measure to fund several vital services in the city, including libraries, by a 61 percent vote. The drastic cuts in library services and threatened closures are widely regarded as having rallied support for the measure's passage.

How They Got There: During the first half of this decade, the Salinas city government struggled with funding shortages, which prompted the city to cut some of its services. The tax increase measure, passed in November 2005, is allowing the city to start restoring more than $15 million in service cuts — which had not only affected libraries, but also closed three recreation centers and eliminated graffiti

Salinas Public Libraries FAST FACTS:

- Home to an extensive collection of books by and about John Steinbeck, who was born in Salinas.

- A system of three branches, each with strong Spanish-language collections.

- Serving a population far less affluent than the surrounding communities, a population with low graduation rates and high density of people under age 18.

- Signature programs: Steinbeck archives, adult literacy services, Chicano Cultural Resource Center, family programming and outreach to migrant workers.

- After the near closure of the system in 2005, a major citizen advocacy effort resulted in the passage of a tax bill that provided essential financial support.

abatement and funding for crossing guards. But with the tax measure passed, the city's financial situation is considerably improved.

Cost of living, especially high housing costs, is a major challenge for local residents and is linked to their mistrust of government and its use of tax revenue. While the median household income in Salinas is $44,667, the median home price is now in excess of $630,000. Only 8.54 percent of households in Salinas have six-figure incomes, so the vast majority is excluded from a housing market in which fixer-uppers start in the $500,000 range. Gang violence is another major concern of Salinas residents, and gang activity is responsible for a substantial portion of the community's crime rate.

Library leaders say that some of the breakdown in funding for libraries was due in part to operational issues within the library system itself, but the funding crisis was a symptom primarily of larger problems with local governance. Almost all of the funding for libraries in Salinas comes from local taxes — the state provides only $14 million to all of California's public libraries in a state with 37 million people. So each community library system's financial success depends on its clout with local government and how much money it can procure on its own.

	Local Revenue Per Capita	State Revenue Per Capita	Total Revenue Per Capita	Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
National Average	$26.44	$2.92	$34.62	$5,351.00	$84,033.00
SALINAS	$19.43	$1.79	$21.97	$50,048.00	$62,017.00

Salinas is led by a mayor, who has been very supportive of the library, and a city manager. Even when it became clear that the libraries might be in jeopardy unless the tax measure passed, the community initially refused to advance the measure. This, according to one leader, was because "there's a mistrust of the city, not necessarily of the library." Leaders told us that citizens in Salinas tended to assume that the libraries were underfunded because the city was misallocating funds, not because there weren't any funds. In the end, people were quite surprised to learn that the libraries would actually have to shut down absent additional funding. "The system has been around so long, people just assumed that libraries would always be there," one leader said.

Outlook for the Future: The Salinas libraries are moving forward with a feeling of renewal after the support they received from voters. With the tax measure passed, the city's three libraries are expanding their total hours open from 33 to 69 hours a week during spring 2006. But they are not yet open full-time. Although five previously cut

If I could be assured that the money would actually go to the libraries instead of, Okay, we have money, and then, Oh, well, we had money, but we had to put it over here. If it was pigeonholed specifically for the libraries, I would say yes.

—Female, Salinas

library positions were to be filled between March and June 2006, city staff said it would take time to recruit personnel to bring the libraries back up to their former service level of 96 hours per week.

Ultimately, this story is a high-profile example of how citizens can be mobilized when libraries are in crisis, when the prospect of an actual shutdown of a library system galvanizes a broad cross section of the community. It underscores libraries' vulnerability in the face of the larger structural fiscal challenges experienced by localities in the face of decreased revenues.

Voices from **Chattahoochee Valley (Georgia)**

In Context: The Chattahoochee Valley Regional Library System serves the city of Columbus, Ga., and the surrounding five counties. The combined city-counties population is about 300,000, most of which is made up of residents of Columbus and nearby Fort Benning. The rural region's population is 47 percent African-American and 50 percent white. Poverty is a significant challenge for the entire region.

The State of the Libraries:

The Chattahoochee Valley Regional Library System is very focused on educating its citizens and helping prepare the workforce to compete in the 21st century. The system faces some distinct challenges because it serves both the city of Columbus and the rural community to the South. Columbus is struggling with an influx of new residents from Fort Benning. The increasing population, without similarly increasing tax revenues, has put a strain on all local government services, including the libraries.

There are a lot of people that really can't afford computers, so therefore they go to the library.... Now everything comes off the computer [and the] Internet, so it's useful for us to go up there and use the Internet.

—Male, Chattahoochee

The library operates with a combination of public and private funds from an endowment. The private funds give the system some stability, but it depends heavily on local taxes. Property taxes are the main source of revenue, but the implementation of legislation freezing tax assessments means that property taxes are fixed at an exceptionally low rate. The funding formula that determines how much money the libraries are allocated from state and local coffers depends on a per capita calculation some say places rural libraries at a disadvantage, since their per capita incomes are much less than those in the urban areas.

Some community voices have said that the newly built central library could be more costly than is warranted for the community. Maintenance and building support costs may drain the system and prevent the library from providing the services the community needs, some have said.

How They Got There: The city-county governments consolidated in 1971 to become the first regional government of its kind in Georgia (and 1 of only 16 in the United States at the time). The library operates on a regional basis, with state and local leaders providing input and a governing board comprising local leaders running daily operations. Key to the library system's operational success is the library board. In Columbus, the libraries have a formal affiliation with the public schools, which adds an additional set of players to the mix.

Students like myself...have to come [to the library] to get reference [materials]. Now, [the library's materials are so] up-to-date, everything comes off the computer, Internet, so it's useful.

—Female, Chattahoochee

A private challenge grant to construct a new library building in Columbus helped forge many new cooperative professional alliances there. The continuing alliances demonstrate the role of the library in community development and the potential for local communities to

	Local Revenue Per Capita	State Revenue Per Capita	Total Revenue Per Capita	Federal Revenue	Other Revenue
National Average	$26.44	$2.92	$34.62	$5,351.00	$84,033.00
CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY	$22.76	$4.71	$28.07	$13,475.00	$108,006.00

unite around library issues. They are also adding to public discussion about how economic development should proceed in the city — some residents want retail and other developments to fully incorporate the library into the surrounding commercial area.

[The library is a] focusing institution because most people don't have access to computers in any other place.

—Chattachoochee Leader

Outlook for the Future: Residents of the Chattahoochee Valley certainly embrace the services their libraries offer. The 90 computers inside the Columbus library are almost always in use, as are the 300 machines in the rural branches. The library is a primary institution because many citizens don't have access to computers in any other place. The library has a difficult time maintaining its technological systems and needs a technical coordinator and a webmaster who

I just had my Internet disconnected, and the library is just — we don't live five miles down the road — I can just bring the kids here after they get out of school or on the weekends or whenever and let them do what they need to do.

—Female, Chattahoochee

can handle computer maintenance. The staff also needs additional training to better help the general public use computers. But staff resources are limited, since state law requires that the library employ certified librarians, and it can happen that one librarian ends up serving four counties. Although there are many certification programs in surrounding states that are accessible, there is no library certification program based in Georgia.

Sometimes parents don't have the time, or sometimes they don't even have the knowledge of teaching their children…you know, read to them when they go to bed. I think this library with the children reading is great for the kids.

—Female, Chattahoochee

The library system is working hard to keep up with the technological demands of local residents and meet staffing challenges. It is also working to reach citizens who can't even get to the library. Given education and literacy concerns, this rural group could benefit from library services the most, but many don't have the transportation means to get there. Some leaders are promoting the use of school buses or other existing infrastructure to get people to the library. In summary, the Chattahoochee Valley showcases the unique circumstances — especially technological needs — that face rural regions working to update their educational resources and provide training to an evolving workforce.

Afterword: Implications for the Future

People love their libraries. What's more, they think libraries are the best-run institutions in their communities and that they spend public money well. It's a great story for the library community to tell, right?

Not so much when local and national leaders and library advocates agree that libraries across America are facing serious challenges. Many public library systems are facing funding cutbacks that have resulted in reduced hours and services. Some observers have even questioned the need for libraries in the age of Google, Amazon.com and the Internet. How do you get the public to focus on those challenges when most people think things are A-OK?

This opinion research study, along with other research by the American Library Association, confirms the powerful connection that the public has with its local libraries. For example, we heard that a resounding 80 percent said that "all children should have a good, safe appealing library in their neighborhood" — and even 76 percent of nonusers of libraries agreed on this point. We saw very positive attitudes about the effectiveness of libraries compared with other public institutions, strong beliefs that libraries have sound financial stewardship and high usage by significant parts of the public.

And these positive feelings for libraries were held even more strongly by the most engaged citizens — those "community soldiers" who are community leaders and active participants, who vote in local elections and who contribute to charitable causes and institutions. In effect, those who could normally be relied upon to raise hell if their libraries fell through the cracks are more likely to think everything is just fine with libraries.

Yet when we talked to national and local political and business leadership, we found a different mind-set. They typically voiced concern about the future financial vulnerability of library systems around the country, and many sensed a nascent crisis brewing that will put library systems on the defensive in the fight for both public and private financial support. Many were quite vocal about the need to reaffirm libraries as vigorous, engaged and absolutely vital public

> This research does not call for wholesale reinvention of libraries. Rather, it suggests that libraries would do well to trumpet their esteemed place in communities and become more vocal about the resources necessary to support their newer, "nontraditional" work.

institutions. Some were worried that in the days of the home computer and the Internet, constituents may not see libraries as a high priority for tax dollars. In large part, their concerns reflect the stresses and strains of diminishing public resources in local and state budgets, but they are also evidence of a conundrum. That is, leaders are uncertain that libraries have in their camp the kinds of advocates who can be counted on to provide a strong base of support in the face of such financial conditions. Meanwhile, library supporters and users seem to assume that the institution is healthy and that the services they value will always be there.

Love Is Blind?

At a time when public institutions such as the police and public education have been subjected to significant public scrutiny and revamping of operations, libraries have been almost immune to critical examination and potential restructuring. Instead, the gap between the positive public attitudes about libraries and a kind of "keep your hands off" posture by some library supporters may well turn out to be a very sharp double-edged sword.

But the research here also suggests ways to address this conundrum and strengthen libraries as active and vital players in helping to address serious community problems. In addition to examining views about libraries, we asked people about their communities. The survey looked for the areas of overlap between perceived community needs and library strengths. It captured the ways political leadership and citizens alike see the challenges facing their communities and explored how libraries might be suited to become part of those solutions.

First, it should be known that what we heard loud and clear from both leadership and the public was that the mission of libraries should remain much the same in terms of free and open access to all citizens and maintaining core library services — efficient and friendly librarians, current books and reference materials, programs for children and well-maintained buildings. This research does not call for wholesale reinvention of libraries. Rather, it suggests that libraries would do well to trumpet their esteemed place in communities and become more vocal about the resources necessary to support their newer, "nontraditional"

work, such as providing technology access to all, providing safe places and programs for teenagers and assisting new immigrants who want to learn the local language and customs.

When we talked to survey respondents about their community needs, we heard about specific areas of concern that libraries could help address. In urban, suburban and rural communities alike, the community issues that bedevil citizens and leaders are those that deal with public safety and reducing crime, followed closely by public education and job development. For the most part, however, the public does not make the fairly obvious connection between libraries and solutions to those community challenges. People generally say that their communities are not doing a very good job of keeping teens out of trouble and helping build adult reading skills that can assist with job skills — yet these are two of the more obvious areas where libraries could be seen as filling the void. The research also indicates that libraries could do a better job of making known their increasingly important role as a "hub" for providing government information and services. These programmatic areas are clear examples of "libraries as potential community solutions." Helping immigrants adapt to the community is an area high on the priority list of civic leaders, though it is of lesser importance to the public.
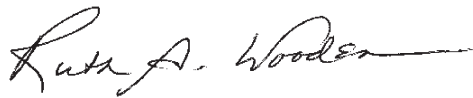
A Time of Reckoning

America's public libraries are facing a pivotal time in their history. There is a rich tradition of public service that infuses citizens with great respect for the mission of libraries. Libraries have received significant public and private financial support over the years, ranging from local property tax support, to state budget funding, to large levels of private philanthropic funding. But funding levels and mechanisms vary tremendously from one community to the next — and that's part of the problem.

During the past several decades, there has been a major effort to upgrade technology and Internet access to bring the benefits of these new technologies to all citizens, regardless of economic circumstances. This has added further to public approval of the all-important contributions of libraries. And of course, libraries have long held a position of special importance to the education of schoolchildren and older students.

The kind of action required for libraries to position themselves securely into the future will demand active and engaged governance. When change happens in communities, it is often the product of the passions of engaged citizen leaders who demand change from elected officials. But our research into a variety of different library environments would suggest that libraries may suffer in some cases from a kind of "benign neglect" by those who are most civically engaged. The reasoning here may be a variation on the theme "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Although the public's strong feelings about how well libraries are doing their jobs make clear they aren't "broken," it doesn't mean there aren't cracks in the foundation. We urge those who are most passionate about the importance of libraries in communities to make certain that the local and state governance structures that determine funding understand all that libraries are able to do for citizens and just how successful their constituents perceive them to be.

Ruth A. Wooden

Ruth A. Wooden
President, Public Agenda

Methodology

The findings in "Long Overdue: A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About Libraries in the 21st Century" are based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of 1,203 adults 18 years and older. Of those, 458 interviews were done with respondents who were considered "community soldiers" or "civic influentials." Interviews were conducted between March 2 and March 14, 2006. The survey was preceded by seven focus groups and 34 in-depth interviews with a variety of national and community leaders.

The Telephone Survey

The study was conducted by telephone among a nationally representative sample of 1,203 adults 18 years and older. Of those, 458 interviews were done with respondents who were considered "civic influentials." The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points for the general portion of the sample. The margin of error is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups with smaller sample sizes.

The first 1,000 adults in the national random sample were selected through a standard, random-digit-dialing technology whereby every household in the 48 contiguous states had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers. After 1,000 interviews were completed among the general population, interviewers continued to screen for "civic influentials" with a target of an additional 200 interviews.

The data was weighted by gender, age, race, region and education. QBal, an industry-standard weighting program that employs a ranking procedure to simultaneously equate weights by each variable, was used to create the final weights. Counts for the weights were obtained through the 2005 U.S. Census Current Population Survey, March Supplement. The main study was weighted to these counts, and then the demographic frequencies of "civic influentials" within the main study were used to weight the oversample completes. The two samples were then combined and balanced to the original number of main study completed interviews.

As in all surveys, question-order effects and other nonsampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these issues, including pretesting the survey instrument and randomizing the order in which some questions were asked.

The survey instrument was designed by Public Agenda, and Public Agenda is solely responsible for all analysis and interpretation of the data. Survey Sampling, Inc., supplied the sample, and surveys were fielded by International Communications Research.

The Focus Groups

Focus groups allow for an in-depth, qualitative exploration of the dynamics underlying the public's attitudes toward complex issues. Insights from participants in these focus groups were important to the survey design, and actual quotes were drawn from the focus groups to give voice to attitudes captured statistically through the surveys. All focus groups were moderated by Public Agenda senior staff. Seven focus groups were conducted as follows:

- Salinas, Calif.: general public
- Providence, R.I.: library users
- Providence, R.I.: library nonusers
- Columbus, Ga.: rural library users
- Phoenix, Ariz.: library users
- Phoenix, Ariz.: library nonusers
- Louisville, Ky.: library middle users

The Expert Interviews

Public Agenda conducted 34 in-depth interviews with national and community leaders in politics, business, education, public health and library services to share their perspectives about the future of public libraries in America. All local community leaders were guaranteed anonymity to ensure their complete cooperation with the study.

Complete Survey Results

The findings in "Long Overdue" are based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of 1,203 adults 18 years and older. The survey was conducted between March 2 and March 14, 2006. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus three percentage points. The margin of error is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

Results of less than 0.5 are signified by an asterisk (*). Results of less than 0.5 are signified by a dash (-). Responses may not always total 100 percent due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report.

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Gender		
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
Q2 Have you ever spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activity, or haven't you had time to do this? By volunteer activity, I mean actually working in some way to help others for no pay?		
Yes	60	90
No	40	10
Don't know	--	--
Q3 How often would you say you volunteer?		
Base = Total who volunteer (n = 840)		
More than 1 day per month	42	64
6–11 days per year	17	20
3–5 days per year	16	10
Less often than that	23	6
Don't know	2	*
Q3/4 Combo Table		
Volunteer	60	90
More than 1 day per month	25	58
6–11 days per year	10	18
3–5 days per year	10	9
Less often than that	13	5
Do not volunteer	40	10
Don't know	--	--
Q4 Do you belong to or ever work with a civic organization or neighborhood group, like a block association, PTA, Scouts, etc.?		
Yes	35	81
No	64	19
Don't know	*	*

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %

Q5 Do you donate money to any churches, charitable groups or associations, either locally or nationally?

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Yes	77	98
No	23	2
Don't know	*	--

Q6 How much did you donate last year?
Base = Total who donate money (n = 1021)

Less than $100	19	3
$100–$300	22	12
More than $300	50	81
Don't know	5	2

Q5/6 Combo

Donate money	77	98
Donated less than $100	15	3
Donated $100–$300	17	11
Donated more than $300	38	80
Does not donate money	23	2
Don't know	*	--

Q7 Are you now registered to vote in your precinct or election district, or haven't you had a chance to register?

Yes, registered	79	97
No, not registered	21	3
Don't know	*	--

Q9 Do you always vote in local elections—that is, elections for local office like mayor or town council—or do you sometimes miss one, rarely vote, or do you never vote in local elections?

Always vote	45	100
Sometimes miss one	22	--
Rarely vote	10	--
Never vote	22	--
Don't know	1	--

Q11 I'd like to ask you a few questions about the local community where you live. How long have you lived in this community?

All of your life	19	17
Less than 1 year	8	4
1–5 years	20	12
6–10 years	14	15
More than that, but not all of your life	40	52
Don't know	--	--

Q12 All in all, would you say things in your local community are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

Right direction	68	74
Wrong track	23	17
Don't know/no opinion	9	8

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q13 What do you think is the most important problem facing your local community today?		
Local economy	3	6
Crime/gangs/justice system/violence	12	10
Development/growth/transportation	16	19
Dissatisfaction with government/politics	4	4
Drugs/alcohol	8	4
Education	8	11
Environment/pollution	3	3
Health care (cost/accessibility)	1	2
National economy	9	7
Morality/ethics/family values	1	1
Poverty/homeless	2	2
Youth/children issues	4	5
Racism	1	1
Taxes	7	8
Immigration/illegal aliens	1	1
Senior issues	*	*
Housing	2	2
Other	4	7
No problem	6	2
Don't know	9	5
Q14 Considering what you get from your local government, do you think you pay more than your fair share of local taxes, less than your fair share or about your fair share?		
More than your fair share	36	30
Less than your fair share	4	6
About your fair share	56	62
Don't know	4	2

	HIGH PRIORITY %	MIDLEVEL PRIORITY %	LOW PRIORITY %	DON'T KNOW %
Q15A - 15K Do you think...should be a high, midlevel, or low priority for your community?				
Totals				
providing quality public education	88	8	4	*
having a safe place where teenagers can congregate	72	18	8	1
providing job search assistance	57	30	11	1
having convenient places for public events and meetings	35	47	18	*
providing early childhood learning programs	74	20	6	1
administering public places where people can access information on the Internet	29	40	27	4
orienting new immigrants to your community and America	25	41	30	4
providing help for people who do not have basic reading skills	68	24	8	*
providing reliable public transportation	50	31	18	1
making government information easily accessible	58	32	8	2
providing reliable medical information	67	24	8	1
Citizen Influentials				
providing quality public education	93	6	1	--
having a safe place where teenagers can congregate	73	15	10	2
providing job search assistance	49	34	14	2
having convenient places for public events and meetings	36	46	17	*
providing early childhood learning programs	72	21	6	1
administering public places where people can access information on the Internet	31	41	22	5
orienting new immigrants to your community and America	27	38	30	4
providing help for people who do not have basic reading skills	68	25	6	1
providing reliable public transportation	46	34	19	1
making government information easily accessible	58	33	8	*
providing reliable medical information	62	25	11	3

	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %	DON'T KNOW %

Q16A - 16T For each of the following characteristics, what grade would you give your local community?
Please give an A, B, C, D or F, where an A is excellent and F is failure.

Total

	A	B	C	D	F	DON'T KNOW
availability of good-paying jobs	11	25	30	14	14	4
assistance finding employment or training for new careers	9	27	31	13	7	12
reducing illiteracy—that is, teaching basic reading skills	15	25	31	11	5	13
the quality of public education	25	36	21	9	4	4
public places where people can access the Internet	17	25	28	10	8	12
affordable quality child care	14	29	25	10	6	17
a place where parents can learn about raising young children and teaching them to read	16	19	33	10	7	15
having a safe place where teenagers can congregate	13	20	26	17	16	7
affordable quality arts or cultural activities	15	29	26	12	11	8
providing well-run parks	31	33	20	7	5	5
maintaining well-run libraries	45	29	14	5	4	3
planning and managing growth in and around your local area	14	30	31	13	8	4
having convenient places for public events and meetings	21	34	25	8	6	5
opportunities for voters to meet their political candidates	18	30	24	11	9	7
orienting new immigrants to your community and America	7	18	25	13	12	25
quality of local health care	22	32	21	8	8	8
having safe neighborhoods	31	33	21	8	6	1
offering dependable public transportation	16	30	23	10	15	6
having well-maintained streets	19	32	25	12	12	1
having an adequate supply of affordable housing	13	26	30	14	12	5

Citizen Influentials

	A	B	C	D	F	DON'T KNOW
availability of good-paying jobs	11	24	39	12	9	4
assistance finding employment or training for new careers	7	24	31	18	6	14
reducing illiteracy—that is, teaching basic reading skills	13	33	29	10	5	10
the quality of public education	24	38	22	8	5	3
public places where people can access the Internet	17	28	29	10	6	10
affordable quality child care	9	36	25	10	7	13
a place where parents can learn about raising young children and teaching them to read	15	23	38	5	4	15
having a safe place where teenagers can congregate	13	21	31	17	14	4
affordable quality arts or cultural activities	17	31	21	12	12	7
providing well-run parks	38	34	16	3	7	1
maintaining well-run libraries	51	26	15	4	3	1
planning and managing growth in and around your local area	13	30	36	10	8	3
having convenient places for public events and meetings	26	38	23	5	3	4
opportunities for voters to meet their political candidates	29	26	25	11	6	4
orienting new immigrants to your community and America	4	26	20	14	8	28
quality of local health care	23	34	24	7	4	7
having safe neighborhoods	31	36	22	4	6	1
offering dependable public transportation	16	31	21	10	13	9
having well-maintained streets	22	28	32	10	7	1
having an adequate supply of affordable housing	9	23	30	19	14	4

	EXCELLENT %	GOOD %	FAIR %	POOR %	DON'T KNOW %
Q17A - 17E How about…? Are they doing an excellent job, a good job, a fair job or a poor job?					
Total					
your local community government	7	36	40	13	4
your local news media	12	38	34	13	3
your local police department	22	46	21	9	2
public schools	18	38	25	13	5
public libraries	31	45	16	4	3
Citizen Influentials					
your local community government	11	39	36	11	2
your local news media	12	38	27	20	3
your local police department	28	45	15	9	2
public schools	22	37	21	14	4
public libraries	39	45	10	4	1

	A LOT %	SOMETHING %	NOT MUCH %	DON'T KNOW %
Q18 Is…something your local or state government can do a lot about, something about or not much about?				
Total				
providing quality public education	64	26	9	2
having a safe place where teenagers can congregrate	49	33	15	3
providing job search assistance	44	38	14	4
having convenient places for public events and meetings	37	40	20	3
administering public places where people can access information on the Internet	33	41	20	7
orienting new immigrants to your community and America	30	42	22	6
providing help for people who do not have basic reading skills	50	37	9	4
providing reliable public transportation	46	34	17	3
making government information easily accessible	50	33	15	2
providing reliable medical information	45	39	13	2
providing understandable legal information	42	38	15	5
Citizen Influentials				
providing quality public education	72	18	8	2
having a safe place where teenagers can congregrate	51	34	12	3
providing job search assistance	42	37	17	4
having convenient places for public events and meetings	43	36	18	3
administering public places where people can access information on the Internet	32	37	21	10
orienting new immigrants to your community and America	30	39	23	8
providing help for people who do not have basic reading skills	51	34	12	3
providing reliable public transportation	48	30	20	2
making government information easily accessible	57	30	11	2
providing reliable medical information	41	36	19	4
providing understandable legal information	37	40	18	5

	YES, WOULD LIKE THE COMPANY MORE %	NO, WOULD NOT LIKE THE COMPANY MORE %	DON'T KNOW %
Q19A - 19D How about... Would having a company involved in this way in the local community make you like the company or not?			
Total			
if it provides assistance to local schools	87	11	2
if it provides assistance to literacy programs	86	11	3
if it sponsors a local public library	82	15	3
if it provides assistance to arts and other cultural programs	75	21	3
Citizen Influentials			
if it provides assistance to local schools	88	9	2
if it provides assistance to literacy programs	89	8	2
if it sponsors a local public library	87	11	2
if it provides assistance to arts and other cultural programs	79	17	3

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q20 About how many times during the past year have you visited the public library?		
Not at all	27	19
1–5 times	31	27
6–10 times	15	13
11–25 times	11	16
Over 25 times	16	26
Don't know	*	--
Q21 Do you have a current card for your local library?		
Yes	59	74
No	40	25
Don't know	*	*
Q22 Do you ever visit the library with your child(ren)?		
Base = total who have children (n = 404)		
Yes	66	84
No	30	15
Don't have children	--	--
Don't know	--	--
S1/S2 22 Combo Table		
Do not have children in HH	60	60
Have children in HH	40	40
Visit library with children	27	34
Do not visit library with children	12	6
Do not have children	--	--
Don't know	--	--

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %

Q23 Have you ever been online and visited the Internet site of a public library?

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Yes	35	44
No	65	56
Don't know	*	*

Q25 Do you think there are too many, about the right amount or too few libraries in your community?

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Too many	1	1
About the right amount	61	70
Too few	34	25
Don't know	4	4

Q25A For each of the following characteristics, what grade would you give your local public library? Please give an A, B, C, D or F, where an A is excellent and F is failure.

Total

	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %	DON'T KNOW %
having enough computers and online services in the library for the people who want to use them	26	26	18	6	2	22
offering access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet, so they can be accessed from home or at work	28	21	9	3	2	33
having enough books, CDs, videos and magazines so that you have a good selection for pleasure reading, reference or learning about a hobby	37	32	12	3	1	15
materials are in good condition and are easy to find	40	32	10	2	2	14
library buildings are well maintained	56	24	8	2	1	9
there are comfortable places to read	45	27	10	3	2	14
having enough friendly, knowledgeable librarians to provide help when you need it	42	28	11	3	2	14
having convenient hours so people can use the services	35	31	15	5	2	12
providing reading hours, homework help and study space for children and teenagers	24	25	16	5	2	27
providing literacy and educational programs for adults and seniors	17	21	16	6	3	37
providing meeting rooms and auditoriums for the use of community groups and for public activities	22	23	18	7	5	25
having access to government forms and services in the library building, like Medicare or FEMA forms	23	18	12	3	3	40

Q25A For each of the following characteristics, what grade would you give your local public library? Please give an A, B, C, D or F, where an A is excellent and F is failure.

Citizen Influentials

	A %	B %	C %	D %	F %	DON'T KNOW %
having enough computers and online services in the library for the people who want to use them	33	31	17	3	1	15
offering access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet, so they can be accessed from home or at work	34	20	9	3	2	37
having enough books, CDs, videos and magazines so that you have a good selection for pleasure reading, reference or learning about a hobby	40	34	10	5	*	10
materials are in good condition and are easy to find	48	30	11	2	--	10
library buildings are well maintained	62	23	8	2	1	5
there are comfortable places to read	54	23	11	2	2	8
having enough friendly, knowledgeable librarians to provide help when you need it	76	47	29	11	2	1
having convenient hours so people can use the services	40	27	19	4	1	9
providing reading hours, homework help and study space for children and teenagers	28	25	19	3	2	24
providing literacy and educational programs for adults and seniors	19	22	16	5	*	38
providing meeting rooms and auditoriums for the use of community groups and for public activities	29	22	18	7	5	19
having access to government forms and services in the library building, like Medicare or FEMA forms	26	21	8	2	3	39

	STRONGLY AGREE %	SOMEWHAT AGREE %	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE %	STRONGLY DISAGREE %	DON'T KNOW %
Q26 For each of the following statements I read, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree:					
Total					
public libraries are essential for maintaining a productive community	63	29	4	2	2
the libraries are an important, quiet oasis from fast-paced, stressful lives	55	34	7	1	3
libraries are one of the only places where kids can learn quiet concentration in a hyperactive world	36	33	20	10	2
libraries are oriented too much toward children and not enough toward adults	7	21	43	22	7
when it comes to reading for pleasure, something electronic or digital can never replace the joy of a held book	63	23	7	5	2
since so many businesses are selling information, we need public libraries to provide free information	61	29	6	1	3
Citizen Influentials					
public libraries are essential for maintaining a productive community	72	23	3	1	1
the libraries are an important, quiet oasis from fast-paced, stressful lives	58	36	3	*	2
libraries are one of the only places where kids can learn quiet concentration in a hyperactive world	32	35	20	10	3
libraries are oriented too much toward children and not enough toward adults	5	16	47	27	5
when it comes to reading for pleasure, something electronic or digital can never replace the joy of a held book	67	21	7	3	2
since so many businesses are selling information, we need public libraries to provide free information	67	24	6	2	1

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q27 Based on your impression, do you think your local government has or has not provided enough money and assistance to the public libraries in your local community?		
Has provided enough money	41	42
Has not provided enough money	43	45
Don't know	15	13
Q28 Do you believe that libraries use their money well, or do they spend it on the wrong things?		
Use money well	71	78
Misspend	7	5
Don't know	21	16

	HIGH PRIORITY %	MIDLEVEL PRIORITY %	LOW PRIORITY %	DON'T KNOW %
Q29 Do you think…should be a high, midlevel, or low priority for your local public library?				
Base = split sample				
Total				
having enough computers and online services for the people that want to use them	64	29	7	1
possibility to reserve books online or by phone prior to arriving	40	42	13	5
offering access to library catalogs and databases through the Internet, so they can be accessed from home or at work	48	40	8	4
providing wireless Internet access inside the library	45	35	16	4
having enough current books for adults	72	21	6	1
having enough current books for children	82	15	1	2
books are in good condition	69	29	2	1
good multimedia collections (CDs/books on tape/DVDs/videos)	55	36	7	2
having enough reference materials	81	16	2	1
subscribing to good magazines and newspapers	52	36	11	2
buildings are well maintained	76	21	3	--
having a beautiful building	24	52	23	1
adequate parking	56	34	9	1
there is a comfortable place to read	65	32	3	1
information and books organized for easy self-service	76	20	3	1
being conveniently located	69	24	6	*
keeping library services free	84	12	4	*
availability of a friendly, knowledgeable librarian	81	15	3	1
there is enough trained staff working to keep up with the demand	65	27	5	3
being open evenings and weekends	73	21	5	1
option to check books out yourself to avoid waiting in line	40	39	20	1
having a café inside the library	12	22	65	2
providing reading hours and other programs for children	79	18	3	1
adult literacy programs	68	24	7	1
providing meeting rooms and auditoriums for the use of community groups and for public activities	43	38	17	1
having access to government forms and services in the library building, like Medicare or FEMA forms	64	25	8	3
programs for senior citizens	62	31	6	2
book discussion groups	30	45	22	2
cultural programs or exhibits	41	43	16	1
being a safe place where teenagers can study and congregate	74	18	7	1
providing job searching assistance	51	32	15	2
programs for new immigrants	39	35	23	3
programs and services for business owners	26	43	26	4

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q30 Which statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?		
All children should have a good, safe, appealing library in their neighborhood	80	82
With all of the great programming on public TV and the many activities children enjoy, libraries just aren't as important in kids' lives as they once were	18	16
Don't know	2	1
Q31 Which statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?		
Public libraries should provide assistance to immigrants who are trying to learn our system and the English language so they can become part of the community	71	74
It costs taxpayers too much money to provide them with these services	25	22
Don't know	4	4
Q32 Which statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right? In our digital age…?		
When so much information exists only electronically, libraries play a crucial role in preserving permanent and unalterable records	76	82
There is no longer a need for hard copies of records because everything we need can be accessed electronically	19	12
Don't know	4	5
Q34 In today's world, with Internet access and online and large booksellers such as Amazon, Borders or Barnes & Noble, do you think libraries have become more, less or the same in importance to their communities?		
More	24	27
Less	36	33
Same	37	38
Don't know	3	2
Q35 Some people think libraries will no longer exist in the future because of all the information available through computers. Other people think libraries will still be needed despite all the advancements of computers. Do you think…?		
Libraries will no longer exist in the future	9	5
They will still be needed	90	95
Don't know	1	1
Q36 If your public library were shut down tomorrow due to lack of funding, which comes closest to how you would feel?		
That something essential and important has been lost, affecting the whole community	78	87
That while something important was lost, it really affects only a few people in the community	17	10
The loss would not be important for your community	3	2
Don't know	1	*
Q37 On any given day, do you have access to a computer at your workplace, at school or at home?		
Yes	79	84
No	21	16
Don't know	*	--

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q38 Have you used a library for Internet access		
Yes	34	39
No	66	61
Don't know	--	--
Q40 How experienced would you say you are at using a computer? Would you say you are...?		
Not at all familiar with computers	18	14
Able to browse the Internet, but little else	17	14
Able to work in the program you are familiar with, but little else	25	29
Able to use advance features in most software packages, such as macros and other advanced features	20	25
Able to do advanced procedures such as defragmenting, networking or programming	19	19
Don't know	1	*
Q41 Do you think that the information you find by yourself on the Internet is more reliable, less reliable or just as reliable as information that a reference librarian directs you to?		
More reliable	13	11
Less reliable	28	29
Just as reliable	47	50
Don't know	11	10
Q42 What groups do you think would be more affected by the disappearance of libraries?		
Small children	44	44
Teenagers	19	14
Parents	6	6
The elderly	18	20
The poor	16	22
People without Internet access	7	9
Students	15	15
Everybody	8	11
Pleasure readers/people that love to read	1	*
Immigrants	2	2
Middle class	1	*
Illiterate/uneducated/less educated people	1	*
Adults	1	1
Researchers	*	*
Businesses	1	*
Children/young people	2	2
Handicapped/disabled	*	*
Minorities	1	--
People who don't know how to use/don't own computers	*	*
Other	2	4
Don't know	7	3

	VERY EFFECTIVE %	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE %	NOT TOO EFFECTIVE %	NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE %	DON'T KNOW %

Q43 For each of the following statements I read, please tell me if you believe it would be very effective, somewhat effective, not too effective or not at all effective in getting people to use libraries more:

Totals

	VERY EFFECTIVE %	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE %	NOT TOO EFFECTIVE %	NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE %	DON'T KNOW %
marketing library services (advertisement and readings)	34	45	11	7	3
working with schools to bring kids to public libraries	67	26	3	2	2
providing access to more consumer services like cafés	20	37	21	19	2
lending more recent DVDs and music	36	40	11	9	3
providing access to other community and government services	33	47	11	6	3
sprucing up the reading environment	37	43	11	6	3

Citizen Influentials

	VERY EFFECTIVE %	SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE %	NOT TOO EFFECTIVE %	NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE %	DON'T KNOW %
marketing library services (advertisement and readings)	32	48	14	3	2
working with schools to bring kids to public libraries	72	22	4	2	1
providing access to more consumer services like cafés	18	32	26	22	3
lending more recent DVDs and music	35	41	12	7	5
providing access to other community and government services	32	48	14	4	2
sprucing up the reading environment	33	45	14	5	3

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %

Q44 As the Internet has developed, more middle-income people have gotten online compared with lower-income people. What should your local government do to address this issue?

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Do nothing and wait for the price of computers and Internet access to fall enough so low-income American can afford to get online	11	9
Support the wiring of libraries and schools so lower-income people can get on the Internet	63	68
Subsidize the purchase of computers and Internet access for low-income Americans	18	14
Don't know	7	8

	YES, FAVOR %	NO, OPPOSE %	DON'T KNOW %

Q45 Now let's suppose that your local library needs additional funds to continue operation. Please tell me if you would favor any of the following as possible solutions. How about…?

Totals

	YES, FAVOR %	NO, OPPOSE %	DON'T KNOW %
taxes being increased to cover the necessary costs	52	44	4
the library charging the people who use it	32	66	2
the library reducing the services it offers the public	20	77	2

Citizen Influentials

	YES, FAVOR %	NO, OPPOSE %	DON'T KNOW %
taxes being increased to cover the necessary costs	60	36	3
the library charging the people who use it	31	65	4
the library reducing the services it offers the public	16	82	1

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %

Q46 When you go to the library, about how often would you say you get what you want? Would you say...?

Base = total library users (n =913)

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Almost always	67	66
Usually	30	31
Never	1	1
Don't know	1	1

Q20/46 Combo Table

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Use library	73	81
Almost always get what you want	49	53
Usually get what you want	22	25
Never get what you want	1	1
Do not use library	27	19
Don't know	*	--

How easy is it to find your way around the library? Would you say...

Base = total library users (n = 913)

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Very easy	67	66
Somewhat easy	27	28
Not too easy	4	2
Not at all easy	1	1
Don't know	1	*

Q20/47 Combo Table

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Library user	73	81
Easy to find your way around	68	77
Very	49	54
Somewhat	20	23
Not easy to find your way around	3	3
Not too	3	2
Not at all	1	1
Do not use library	27	19
Don't know	*	--

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %

Q48 Why don't you use the library?

Base = total who do not use the library (n = 289)

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Use other places instead	1	4
Too busy	24	21
No interest/use for it	17	11
No reason	10	8
Buys books	4	4
Use university/school library	4	*
Use Internet/go online	13	10
I'm too old	3	9
Too far to travel/not very handy/need transportation	4	5
Disabled/handicapped	7	9
Hours are not convenient	1	1
Do not have a library	1	1
Illiterate/don't read too well	2	--
Have my own library/a lot of books in my home	1	2
Just lazy	1	--
Library under construction	1	1
Books that I need weren't available/outdated	1	1
Other	9	21
Don't know	3	1

Q20/48 Combo Table

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Use library	73	81
Do not use library	27	19
Use other places instead	*	1
Too busy	7	4
No interest/use for it	5	2
No reason	3	2
Buys books	1	1
Use university/school library	1	*
Use Internet/go online	4	2
I'm too old	1	2
Too far to travel/not very handy/need transportation	1	1
Disabled/handicapped	2	2
Hours are not convenient	*	*
Do not have a library	*	*
Illiterate/don't read well	1	--
Have my own library/a lot of books in my home	*	*
Just lazy	*	--
Library under construction	*	*
Books that I need weren't available	*	*
Other	2	4
Don't know	*	--

Q49 Since you hardly ever use the library, how do you feel about your tax money going to support it?

Base = total who do not use the library (n = 289)

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
I still support it as an institution	60	74
I don't mind one way or the other	33	22
I would rather my money not go toward it	5	2
Don't know	2	2

Q20/49 Combo Table

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Library user	73	81
Do not use library	27	19
Still support it as an institution	16	14
Don't mind one way or the other	9	4
Would rather money not go toward it	1	*
Don't know	*	--

Q51 Are you...?

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Single—that is, never married	18	9
Single, living with a partner	6	2
Married	54	64
Separated	3	2
Widowed	8	10
Divorced	10	10
Don't know	--	--

Q52 Currently, are you yourself employed full-time, part-time or not all?

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Full-time	51	55
Part-time	13	9
Not employed	34	33

Q53 Are you...?

Base = total not employed (n = 443)

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Retired	48	77
A homemaker	19	15
A student, or	9	1
Temporarily unemployed	12	*
Disabled/handicapped	11	6
Other	*	--

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q52/53 Combo Table		
Employed	64	64
Full-time	51	55
Part-time	13	9
Not employed	34	33
Retired	17	25
Homemaker	6	5
A student	3	*
Temporarily unemployed	4	*
Disabled/handicapped	4	2
Other	*	--
Don't know	--	--
Q54 What is your age?		
18–29	20	4
30–39	19	14
40–49	21	33
50–64	21	22
65+	16	24
Q55 In politics today, do you consider yourself a liberal, a moderate or a conservative?		
Liberal	20	23
Moderate	33	31
Conservative	33	37
Don't know	9	3
Q56 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent or something else?		
Republican	24	30
Democrat	33	39
Independent	23	19
Something else	11	5
Don't know	3	*
Q57 Were you, either of your parents or any of your grandparents born in a country other than the United States?		
Yes (NET)	31	32
Yes, respondent	6	7
Yes, parents	10	11
Yes, grandparents	21	22
No	66	64
Don't know	1	1

	TOTAL %	CITIZEN INFLUENTIALS %
Q58 What is the highest level of school you completed?		
Less than high school	15	10
High school graduate	31	16
Some college or trade school, no degree	19	22
Associates or 2-year degree	7	9
Bachelor's or 4-year degree	14	19
Graduate degree	11	21
Q59 Are you white, black or African-American, Hispanic, Asian or something else?		
White	68	70
Black/African-American	11	8
Hispanic	12	10
Asian	1	1
Something else	5	6
Don't know	*	*
Q60 I'm going to read some ranges of annual household income. Please stop me when I read the one that best describes your total household income in 2005.		
$15,000 or under	12	3
$15,001–$25,000	11	11
$25,001–$35,000	12	11
$35,001–$50,000	17	16
$50,001–$75,000	15	16
Over $75,000	18	28
Don't know	5	1
Q63 Is your home currently owned or rented?		
Owned	69	80
Rented	27	16
Don't know	1	--
Q64 May we call you back another day if we have a quick follow-up question?		
Yes	85	85
No	12	11
Don't know	1	*
Q66 Region		
Northeast	19	16
North central	23	22
South	36	29
West	23	33
Q67 Metro Status		
Urban	31	30
Suburban	44	45
Rural	25	25

Public Agenda