

Are You Overdue?

Newport News Public Library System 2008 Survey of Nonusers

Summary of Preliminary Results, June 2009

Introduction, Background

The Strategic Plan 2007-2011 developed by Newport News Public Library System included the goal of excellence in marketing, community relations and development in order to promote library services and programs. One of the action steps was to use branding for the Library System to develop positive name recognition of the Library System among media and general public and to expand knowledge and use of libraries. This duty was assigned to the community relations and programs coordinator, Karen L. Gill, upon her employment in May 2007.

Gill created a 12-step plan for developing the branding, and it was approved by Izabela M. Cieszynski, library director. The first steps were to develop internal support, form a branding committee, develop goals and objectives and identify the target audience.

The branding committee, with Gill as chair, selected nonusers of the library as the target audience. The committee members researched other surveys conducted by the Library System and determined that the information collected was primarily anecdotal and focused on users of the library, rather than the nonusers. Previous surveys did not yield enough information to be able to target nonusers nor to develop key messages, strategies and techniques to reach this group. Therefore, the next step was to gather information about the nonusers in order to do this.

This was accomplished through primary, external research that was gathered through a survey administered in print and on the Library System's website during September and October 2008. This report gives the results from this survey.

Survey Goals

- Define nonusers
- Determine who the nonusers are through demographics of age, race, gender, children in the home, occupation, and how long they have lived in Newport News
- Determine nonusers' interests, and how they use their time and discretionary income.
- Determine nonusers' perceptions of the Library System and why they don't use the library.
- Determine nonusers' knowledge of what the Library System has available to serve them.

Methodology

The branding committee wrote and reviewed the survey questions to conform to accepted survey research standards as detailed in the 2001 master's report, "An Analysis of the

Usefulness of Readership Research Conducted by a Midwestern Daily Newspaper," written by Gill.

Questions were written to provide reliable and valid responses, and the printed survey was designed to encourage as many respondents as possible. The printed surveys were made available to the public to complete in the Libraries, as well as at various locations and events in Newport News, including Barnes & Noble bookstore, Back-to-School nights, Denbigh Day, Southeast Community Day, Fall Festival, Downing-Gross Cultural Center's Grand Opening and Riverside Farm. They also were provided to schools, recreation centers and a church. An online version of the survey was created by Sue Baldwin, technology librarian, through the Plone system and available from a link on the Library System's website.

Incentives were provided to encourage the public to complete the survey. Each respondent received candy or a printed CD/DVD cleaner. Respondents also could enter a drawing for free bookbags filled with books. The survey was promoted through news releases, mass emails to city employees and PR practitioners, links from the city's homepage, bookmarks and posters.

Surveys completed in the libraries were kept separate from those completed in other non-library locations and from those completed online. A total of 717 surveys were completed. Of these, 351 were completed online, 289 were completed in non-library locations and 77 were completed inside the Libraries.

Responses from printed surveys were entered into the online version manually by library employees for ease of compiling data. Sue Baldwin compiled the results from Plone and provided these results to Carl Jackson, a Newport News city employee with the Planning Department, who analyzed the results. Gill analyzed the write-in responses and prepared the summary.

Key Findings

- **Nonusers (23 percent):**

Nonusers were defined as those who reported that they had not visited a Newport News Public Library within the past 12 months. Of the 717 total respondents, 166 fit into this category, and they could have completed the survey either in non-library locations or online.

Among this group, 68 percent wrote "books" for their first thoughts of libraries. This was a higher percentage answering books than any other of the respondent groups, which indicates that they are not aware of the other services and programs available in the Newport News libraries. For libraries in general, other common responses included reading, information, knowledge and quiet. For Newport News Libraries in particular, other common write-in responses, in addition to books, were about not knowing or using the libraries and great/helpful or other positive comments. In addition to not having visited the libraries, most had not used library resources online either.

Despite having answered on question 9 that they had not visited a library in the past 12 months, a surprising number answered in question 13 that they used a library outside of Newport News or a school or college library. This could indicate that the questions were

not clear, that the respondents had not read them clearly or that they were basing their responses to question 13 on visits that were longer ago than 12 months. Most likely, the respondents interpreted question number 9 as only referring to Newport News libraries.

Among the other responses to question 13, which sought to determine respondents' reasons for not using the library, the highest response was in the "other" category, and those responses are grouped with responses from other groups for analysis (see write-in responses below). The next highest response was "I use a library outside of Newport News" and "I don't need to use a library."

For question 14, which asked about what respondents didn't like about the Newport News Libraries, 70 percent answered that they did not agree with any of the statements, and the next highest group, 31 percent, responded with "other" (see write-in responses analysis below).

For all programs and services, except for one, the most common response was "I don't know." The only one for which nonusers correctly selected "is offered" more than "I don't know," at 42 percent, was card catalog and resources online.

Most commonly used way to get information was the Internet; 68 percent were female; and 88 percent were not active-duty military. The greatest percentage, 28 percent, lived in 23602 zip code, and had lived there more than six years. Sixty-five percent did not have children living with them, and the ages were evenly split between 18-30, 41-50 and 51-60. Thirty percent were college graduates, and 65 percent were White/Caucasian.

Compared with the overall demographics of those who completed the survey, nonusers were more likely to be male and active-duty military. They were more likely to live in downtown Newport News, to have lived longer in their homes, to be younger and White/Caucasian.

- **Non-library respondents (40 percent):**

Of the 717 total respondents, 289 completed the written survey in non-library locations within the community. These locations included booths set up by the Library System at Fall Festival, Denbigh Day, Barnes & Noble and other locations. This group was the least likely to know about library programs and services.

Among this group, 60 percent mentioned "books" for their first thought of libraries, followed by 12 percent for reading/study. For first thoughts of Newport News Libraries, the highest response after books was expressions of not using or knowing about the libraries, with a surprisingly large number stating that they didn't know that any libraries existed in Newport News.

The top three highest percentages were all within the past six months and primarily for the purposes of checking out books and doing research. Ninety-one percent were happy with their most recent visit. For visits within the past 12 months, most were for checking out books, as well as CDs and DVDs, and doing research. Most visits were noon-9 p.m., and 55 percent had not used library services online.

Seventy-six percent did not agree with any of the statements about what they didn't like about NN Libraries. The next highest percentage, 15 percent, was for write-in responses (see below), followed by 6 percent who selected "Newport News Libraries don't have up-to-date or new materials."

For most programs and services, the most common response was "I don't know." But for the following services, the greatest response was "is offered:" card catalog and online resources, movie DVDs and music CDs, lists of books to match your interests, current magazines and newspapers, computers and Wi-Fi, research assistance, drive-up book returns, photocopy and fax services, meeting space and programs for adults.

The most common way to get information was the Internet, and 71 percent of respondents were female, and 91 percent were not active-duty military. Half of the respondents have lived at their current address for more than six years, and 53 percent do not have children living with them. Twenty-two percent were in the 41-50 age group, and 28 percent were college graduates.

- **Online respondents (49 percent):**

Of the 717 total respondents, 351 completed the survey on the Library System's website, the greatest number. Online respondents were more likely to express negative opinions of the libraries and to use library services online.

Among this group, 67 percent mentioned "books" for their first thought of libraries, followed by 13 percent for quiet/peaceful/relaxing. For first thoughts of Newport News Libraries, the highest response after books was expressions of the availability of the libraries being local and close-by. But the highest percentage of those offering negative comments about the libraries were in this group: 7 percent. These included limited selections, dirty, old and below average.

Thirty-two percent have visited a library within the week, and the most recent visit for 20 percent was one to six months ago. Visits were primarily to check out books and other reasons (see write-in responses). This group had the largest percentage not happy with their most recent visit (7 percent). The reasons included lack of selection, limited computer access and rude or unhelpful staff. Eighty-nine percent visited libraries for other reasons in the last 12 months (see write-in responses). Nineteen percent of visits were 5-9 p.m. As might be expected from those who completed the survey online, this group had the largest percentage who used library services online, although a surprising 39 percent had not.

Seventy-three percent did not agree with any of the statements about what they did not like about the NN Libraries. The next highest percentage, 16 percent, was for write-in responses (see below), followed by 4 percent who selected "Newport News Libraries don't have up-to-date or new materials."

For all programs and services, the most common response was "is offered," even for the two that are NOT currently offered in the Newport News Libraries (coffee shop/ art galleries/exhibits and listening stations for CDs). Overall, though, this group was the

next most knowledgeable about programs and services offered by the Libraries after the in-library respondents.

The most common way to get information was the Internet. For the other demographic information, 83 percent of respondents were female, and 98 percent were not active-duty military. Forty-six percent of the respondents have lived at their current address for more than six years, and 54 percent do not have children living with them. Twenty-six percent were in the 41-50 age group, and 35 percent were college graduates.

Library respondents (11 percent)

Of the 717 total respondents, 77 completed the written survey in one of the Newport News Public Libraries, the smallest number. Expectedly, this group was most knowledgeable about library programs and services.

After books, the most common first thoughts of libraries were reading/study, and of Newport News Libraries, it was positive comments about the libraries, including helpfulness. Sixty-percent said their most recent visit, presumably the current visit, was to do research. This was the only group with the greatest response of anything other than to check out books. Ninety-five percent were happy with their visit; five percent replied maybe; and no one was unhappy. Fifty-five percent, the same as for non-library respondents, had not used library resources online.

Sixty-six percent did not agree with any of the statements about the NN Libraries, but 12 percent agreed that "Newport News Libraries don't have up-to-date or new materials." For all programs and services except for one, the most common response was "is offered." For coffee shop/ art galleries/exhibits, 43 percent chose "should be offered." Fifty-six percent incorrectly chose "is offered" for listening stations for CDs, possibly indicating that they did not read closely and mistook the question as simply asking whether CDs were available.

Compared to the overall respondents, in-library respondents were more likely to be female, to live in 23607 zip code, and to be slightly less educated. They were less likely to have children living at home and included more in the younger age ranges.

- **Write-in responses**

For the write-in responses to all questions, other than 1 and 2, it was not possible to separate them into nonusers, non-library respondents, online respondents or library respondents, so this analysis is based on the total number of 717 respondents.

Most commonly reported reasons in the write-in responses for visiting the library on the most recent visit were to use the copier, visit with others and study or do homework. The most commonly given reasons for visiting over the past 12 months (that were not listed in the selections) were to check out books on tape and to shop at the Bookstore or a book sale.

Those who were unhappy with their most recent visit most commonly reported issues with lack of selection, limited computer access and rude or unhelpful staff.

Regarding the most convenient time for them to visit the library, the greatest number dealt with wanting the library to be open later hours and more hours on weekends.

For question 13, which attempted to determine why respondents don't use the library or don't use it more often, the greatest number of write-in responses dealt with the location of the libraries in relation to their work or home. Others dealt with lack of selection, and fines, overdue books or loaning issues. The greatest convergences of write-in responses to all questions came from the 26 who provided negative aspects of the atmosphere in the libraries as things they don't like about the Newport News libraries. These included noise level, crowded conditions, safety, comfort, decor and lack of cleanliness. Other responses included lack of selection or lack of services.

For ideas on programs or services the libraries should offer, the most common suggestions were reading groups/clubs for adults, more current movie DVDs and more current bestsellers.

Because of an error in the software that was used to compile responses, the responses to question 16, which asked respondents what they like to do in their free time, is limited only to the write-in responses. The top three most often given were arts/crafts, religious activities and writing.

The most common write-in response to military duty location was Norfolk, and the zip codes most commonly entered were all in Hampton or York County. Write-in responses for other questions could fit into the provided categories.

- **Demographics of all respondents**

Respondents were 77 percent female, and 95 percent were not active-duty military personnel. Of the 5 percent who were active-duty military, 34 percent were stationed at Fort Eustis, and 26 percent were stationed at Yorktown Naval Weapons Station. The largest groups of respondents' zip codes were 16 percent in 23608, and 12 percent in 23602 (both in the Denbigh area), and 48 percent of respondents have lived at this address more than six years.

Fifty-four percent do have not children living with them; 24 percent were in the 41-50 age group; and 31 percent were college graduates. Race of the respondents was 55 percent White/Caucasian, 32 percent Black/African-American, and 5 percent bi-racial or mixed ancestry.

Survey instrument and detailed results are attached

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Each person who completed a survey