LAKE FOREST LIBRARY

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT: SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Today's libraries are subject to high levels of scrutiny from their constituent groups pertaining to budgeting, allocation of resources, and response to user needs and desires. As the strategic planning process begins, it is vital to be in tune with the thoughts of all of these groups – users, taxpayers, and community partners. An effective community needs assessment provides a framework for the library to allocate resources most effectively according to the needs of its community, remain relevant to its patrons, and help position it to react to changing trends in the future.
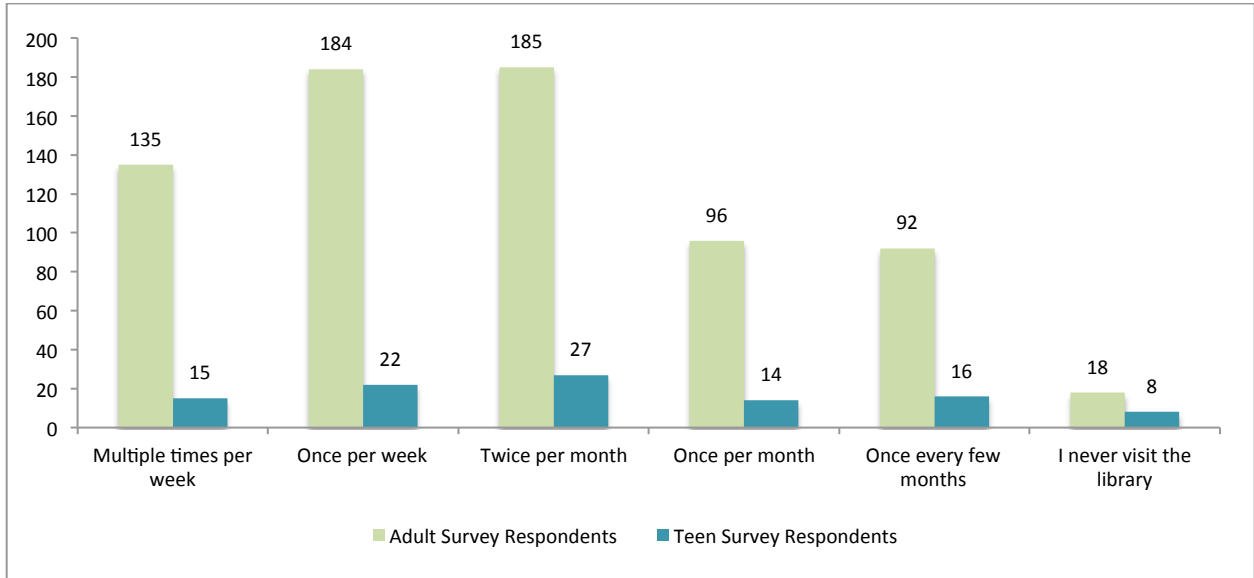
COMMUNITY POPULATION

According to the American Community Survey and U.S. Census data, Lake Forest has seen slight population decline since 2000, as well as an increasingly aging population. During this time period, the median age has increased from 41.0 years (2000 Census) to 47.0 years (American Community Survey, 2011-2015).

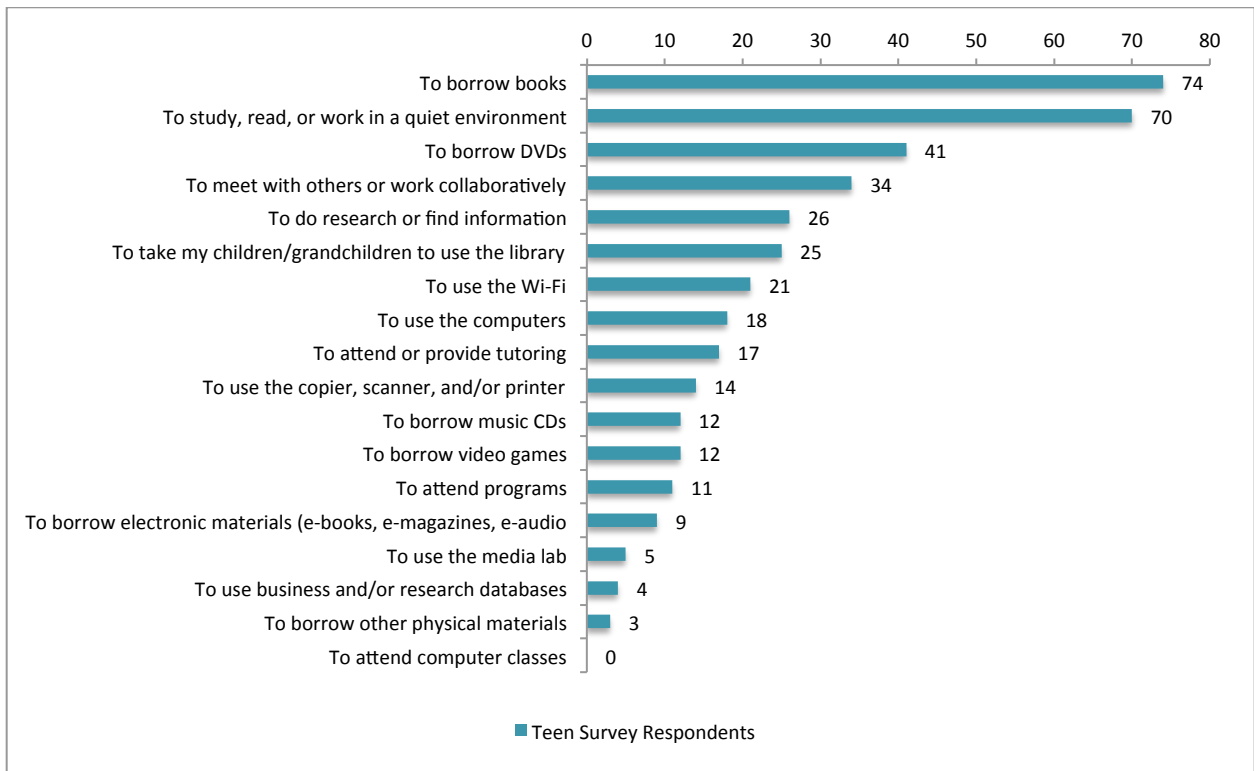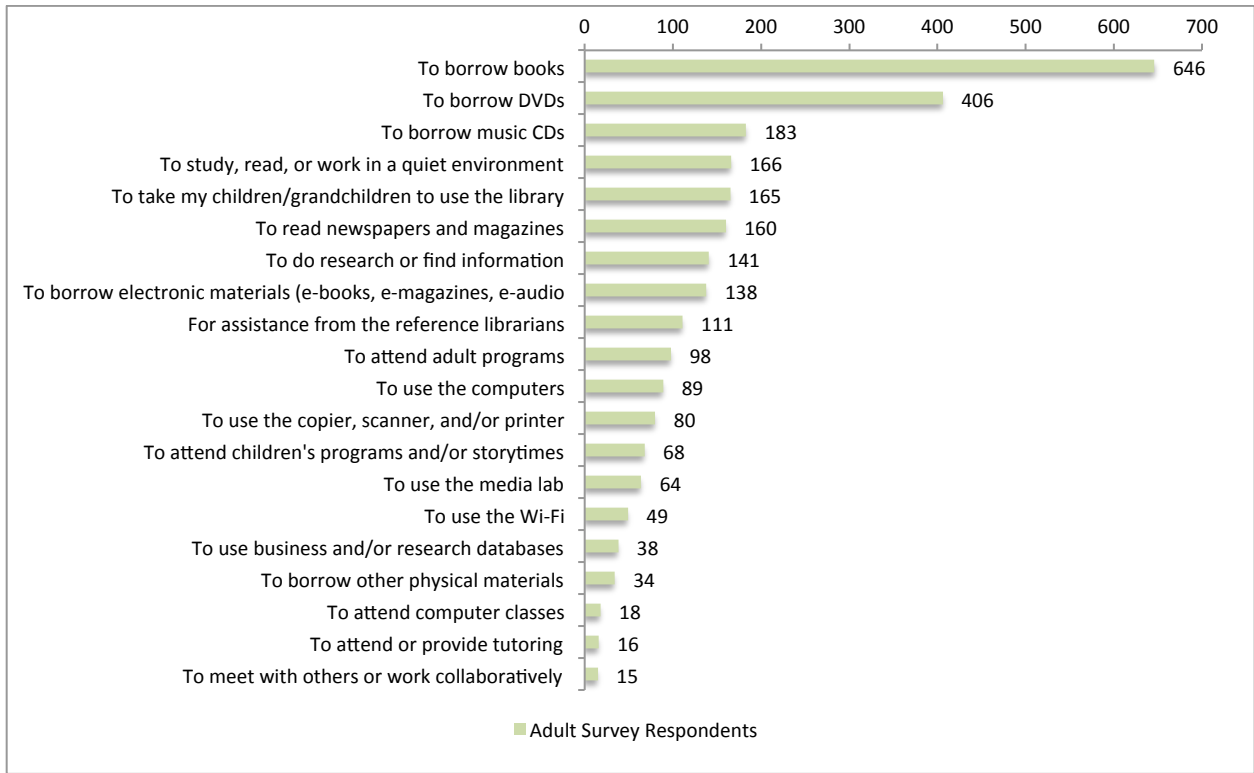### COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online survey was distributed during the spring of 2017 via e-blast and posts on social media and the library's website. Paper copies were also made available at the library and during library events. During the open survey period, 823 survey responses (representing 1,932 household members) were received. Survey results are as follows:
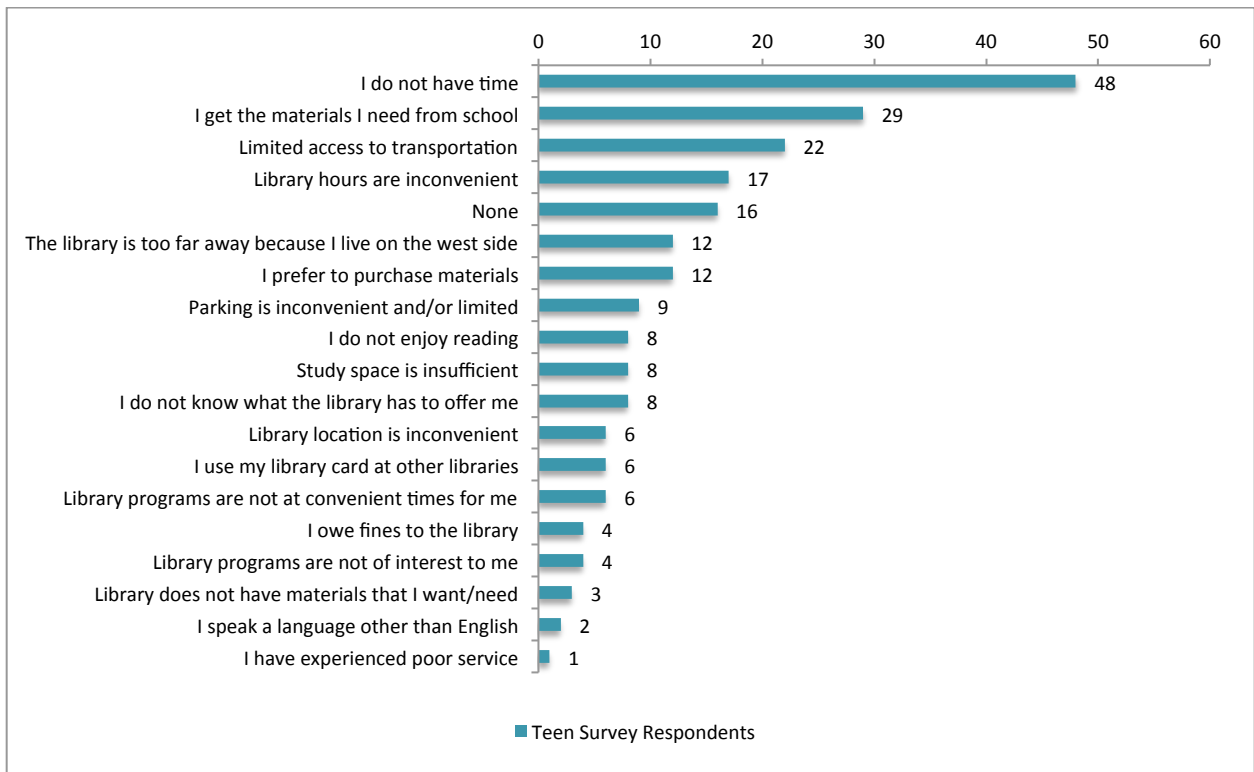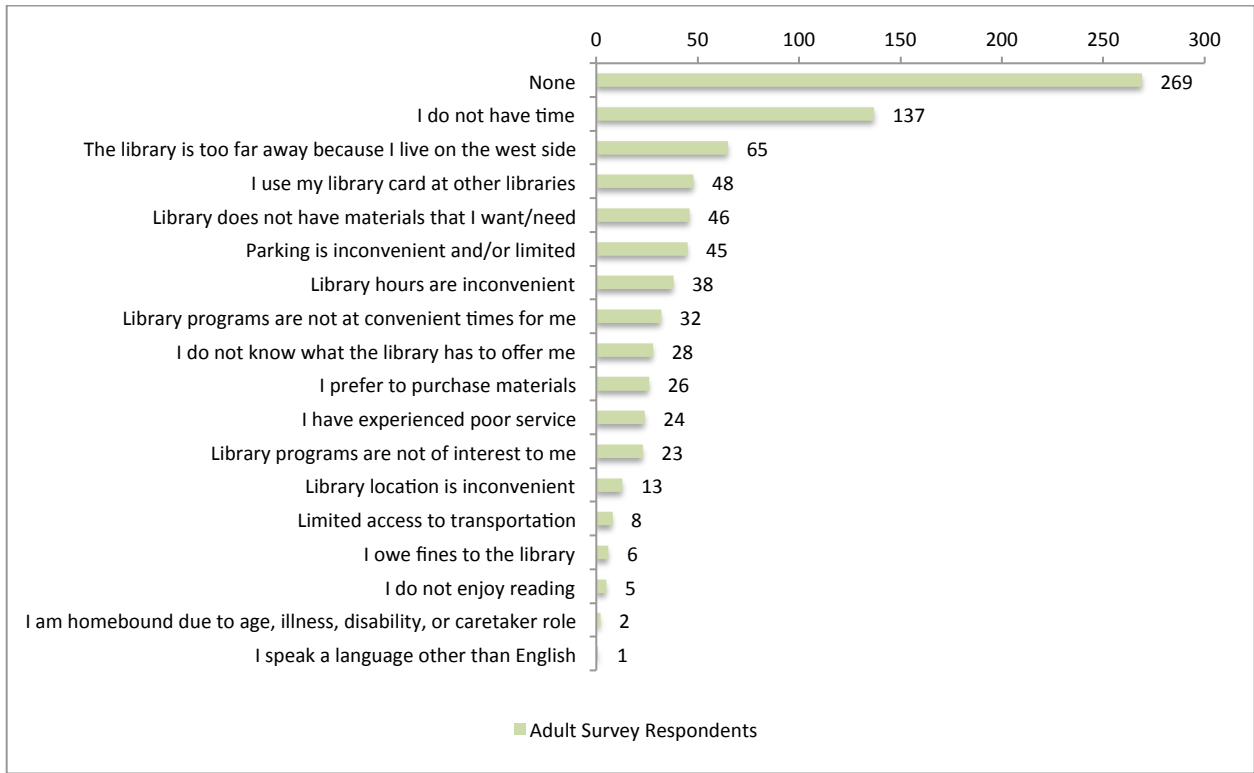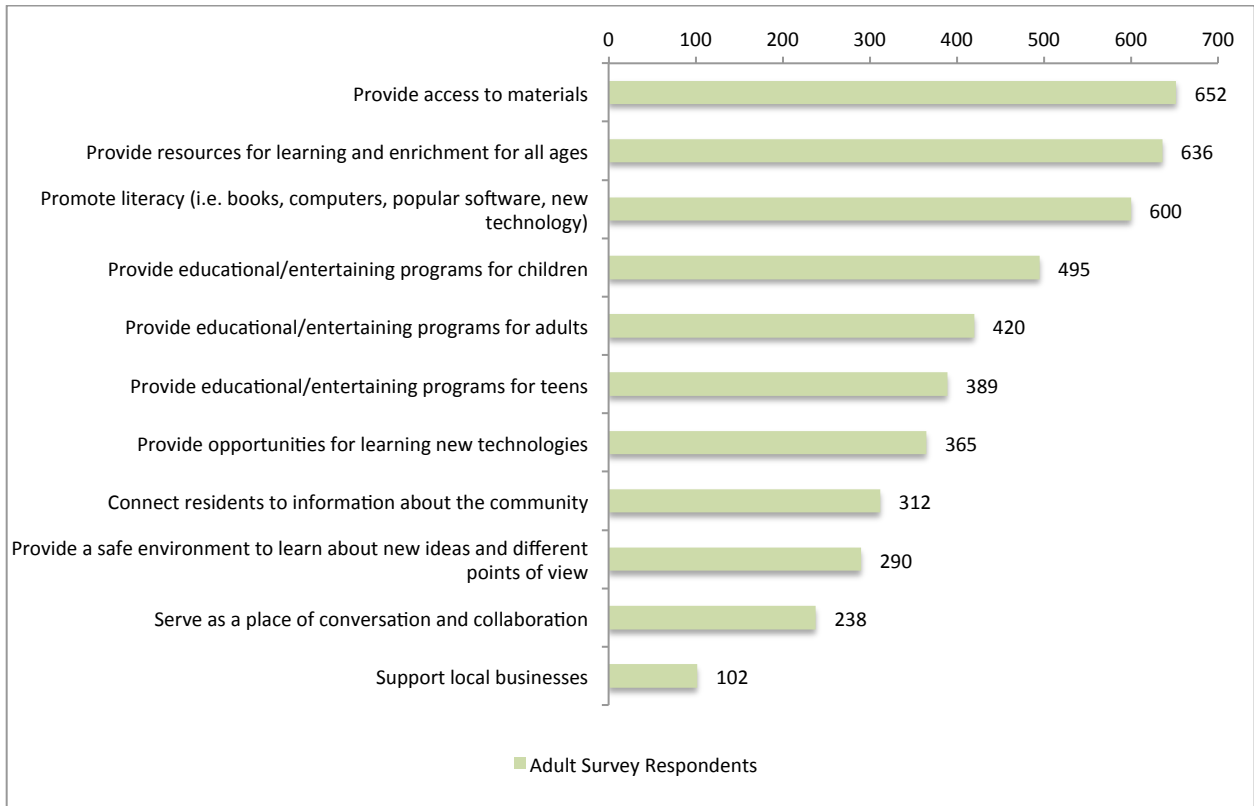
HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE LIBRARY?

WHAT ARE YOU REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY?
(PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

	Adult Survey Respondents
To borrow books	646
To borrow DVDs	406
To borrow music CDs	183
To study, read, or work in a quiet environment	166
To take my children/grandchildren to use the library	165
To read newspapers and magazines	160
To do research or find information	141
To borrow electronic materials (e-books, e-magazines, e-audio	138
For assistance from the reference librarians	111
To attend adult programs	98
To use the computers	89
To use the copier, scanner, and/or printer	80
To attend children's programs and/or storytimes	68
To use the media lab	64
To use the Wi-Fi	49
To use business and/or research databases	38
To borrow other physical materials	34
To attend computer classes	18
To attend or provide tutoring	16
To meet with others or work collaboratively	15

	Teen Survey Respondents
To borrow books	74
To study, read, or work in a quiet environment	70
To borrow DVDs	41
To meet with others or work collaboratively	34
To do research or find information	26
To take my children/grandchildren to use the library	25
To use the Wi-Fi	21
To use the computers	18
To attend or provide tutoring	17
To use the copier, scanner, and/or printer	14
To borrow music CDs	12
To borrow video games	12
To attend programs	11
To borrow electronic materials (e-books, e-magazines, e-audio	9
To use the media lab	5
To use business and/or research databases	4
To borrow other physical materials	3
To attend computer classes	0

WHICH FACTORS REFLECT WHY YOU DO NOT USE THE LIBRARY MORE OFTEN, IF ANY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

Factor	Adult Survey Respondents
None	269
I do not have time	137
The library is too far away because I live on the west side	65
I use my library card at other libraries	48
Library does not have materials that I want/need	46
Parking is inconvenient and/or limited	45
Library hours are inconvenient	38
Library programs are not at convenient times for me	32
I do not know what the library has to offer me	28
I prefer to purchase materials	26
I have experienced poor service	24
Library programs are not of interest to me	23
Library location is inconvenient	13
Limited access to transportation	8
I owe fines to the library	6
I do not enjoy reading	5
I am homebound due to age, illness, disability, or caretaker role	2
I speak a language other than English	1

Factor	Teen Survey Respondents
I do not have time	48
I get the materials I need from school	29
Limited access to transportation	22
Library hours are inconvenient	17
None	16
The library is too far away because I live on the west side	12
I prefer to purchase materials	12
Parking is inconvenient and/or limited	9
I do not enjoy reading	8
Study space is insufficient	8
I do not know what the library has to offer me	8
Library location is inconvenient	6
I use my library card at other libraries	6
Library programs are not at convenient times for me	6
I owe fines to the library	4
Library programs are not of interest to me	4
Library does not have materials that I want/need	3
I speak a language other than English	2
I have experienced poor service	1

WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN LAKE FOREST? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

Category	Adult Survey Respondents
Provide access to materials	652
Provide resources for learning and enrichment for all ages	636
Promote literacy (i.e. books, computers, popular software, new technology)	600
Provide educational/entertaining programs for children	495
Provide educational/entertaining programs for adults	420
Provide educational/entertaining programs for teens	389
Provide opportunities for learning new technologies	365
Connect residents to information about the community	312
Provide a safe environment to learn about new ideas and different points of view	290
Serve as a place of conversation and collaboration	238
Support local businesses	102

■ Adult Survey Respondents

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF ADULT PROGRAMS.

Based on assigning weights[1] to the available responses by level of interest, the programs listed below are in order of highest interest to lowest interest and include the weighted score (in parentheses). Raw counts of each response are provided following the weighted list.

Literature/Author Talks (3.98)	Politics and Current Events (3.44)
Arts and Culture (3.92)	Culinary/Cooking/Food/Entertaining (3.42)
History (local and otherwise) (3.81)	Gardening (3.29)
Travel (3.72)	Genealogy (3.23)
Music and/or Film (3.72)	Writing and Publishing (3.09)
Technology (3.57)	Crafts (2.93)
Health and Wellness (3.53)	Sports (2.58)
Book Discussion Groups (3.46)	

	Very Interested	Interested	Neither Interested nor Disinterested	Disinterested	Very Disinterested
Arts and Culture	209	249	145	36	15
Book Discussion Groups	96	223	231	65	27
Crafts	56	138	203	134	80
Culinary/Cooking/Food/Entertaining	103	221	191	78	42
Gardening	85	205	202	93	48
Genealogy	88	165	220	95	53
Health and Wellness	96	257	202	52	30
History (local and otherwise)	160	272	159	39	16
Literature/Author Talks	209	268	133	28	10
Music and/or Film	137	257	182	36	21
Politics and Current Events	92	226	207	55	40
Sports	19	87	228	152	113
Technology	112	235	200	47	28
Travel	136	270	168	37	25
Writing and Publishing	61	146	253	99	56

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[1] Very Interested: 5 points; Interested: 4 points, and so on.

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF TEEN PROGRAMS.

Based on assigning weights[2] to the available responses by level of interest, the programs listed below are in order of highest interest to lowest interest and include the weighted score (in parentheses). Raw counts of each response are provided following the weighted list.

Summer Jobs (4.09)
College Planning (3.95)
Music and/or Film (3.89)
New Technology (3.86)
Young Adult Literature and Author Visits (3.69)
Arts and Culture (3.66)
Career Planning (3.63)
Living On Your Own Basics (3.63)
Writing and Publishing (3.54)
Comics and Graphic Novels (3.08)
Gaming (3.02)

	Very Interested	Interested	Neither Interested nor Disinterested	Disinterested	Very Disinterested
Arts and Culture	22	33	32	7	3
Career Planning	17	38	33	7	2
College Planning	33	37	19	5	3
Comics and Graphic Novels	17	17	29	21	11
Gaming	16	20	22	24	13
Living On Your Own Basics	21	30	34	10	1
Music and/or Film	35	31	24	5	4
New Technology	26	39	25	6	1
Summer Jobs	42	31	17	5	2
Writing and Publishing	22	29	31	9	6
Young Adult Literature and Author Visits	32	26	20	10	7

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[2] Very Interested: 5 points; Interested: 4 points, and so on.

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS.

Based on assigning weights[3] to the available responses by level of interest, the programs listed below are in order of highest interest to lowest interest and include the weighted score (in parentheses). Raw counts of each response are provided following the weighted list.

Summer Reading Club (3.66)	Monthly Club Activities (e.g., Lego Club) (3.27)
Arts and/or Crafts (3.42)	Multicultural Programs (3.26)
New Technology (3.39)	Book Clubs and/or Book Discussion Groups (3.26)
Music (3.37)	Author Talks (e.g., parenting topics) (3.22)
Storytime (3.35)	Puppet Shows (3.10)
Family Movies (3.32)	Movement Programs (e.g., yoga, dance, parachute play) (3.06)
Technology Classes (3.32)	Special Needs Programs (3.02)
Theatrical Performances (3.27)	

	Very Interested	Interested	Neither Interested nor Disinterested	Disinterested	Very Disinterested
Arts and/or Crafts	119	128	183	43	52
Author Talks (e.g., parenting topics)	75	126	212	49	56
Book Clubs and/or Book Discussion Groups	69	139	216	47	47
Family Movies	85	140	202	46	48
Monthly Club Activities (e.g., Lego Club)	84	116	226	44	50
Movement Programs (e.g., yoga, dance, parachute play)	68	90	230	73	60
Multicultural Programs	78	126	222	43	51
Music	74	171	189	35	46
New Technology	103	131	194	36	51
Puppet Shows	58	115	225	60	59
Technology Classes	92	125	207	38	53
Theatrical Performances	79	133	214	42	53
Special Needs Programs	53	79	266	49	64
Storytime	114	106	202	49	51
Summer Reading Club	174	115	160	31	44

[3] Very Interested: 5 points; Interested: 4 points, and so on.

PLEASE INDICATE WHICH ELECTRONIC MATERIALS YOU USE AND HOW YOU ACCESS THEM. (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)
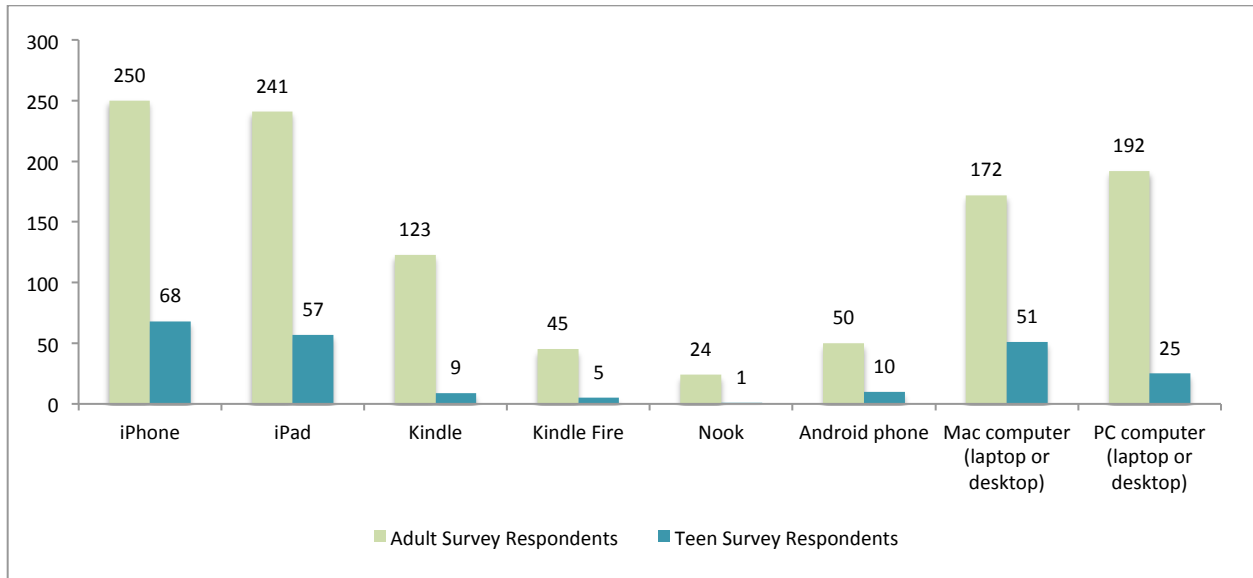
Adult Survey Respondents
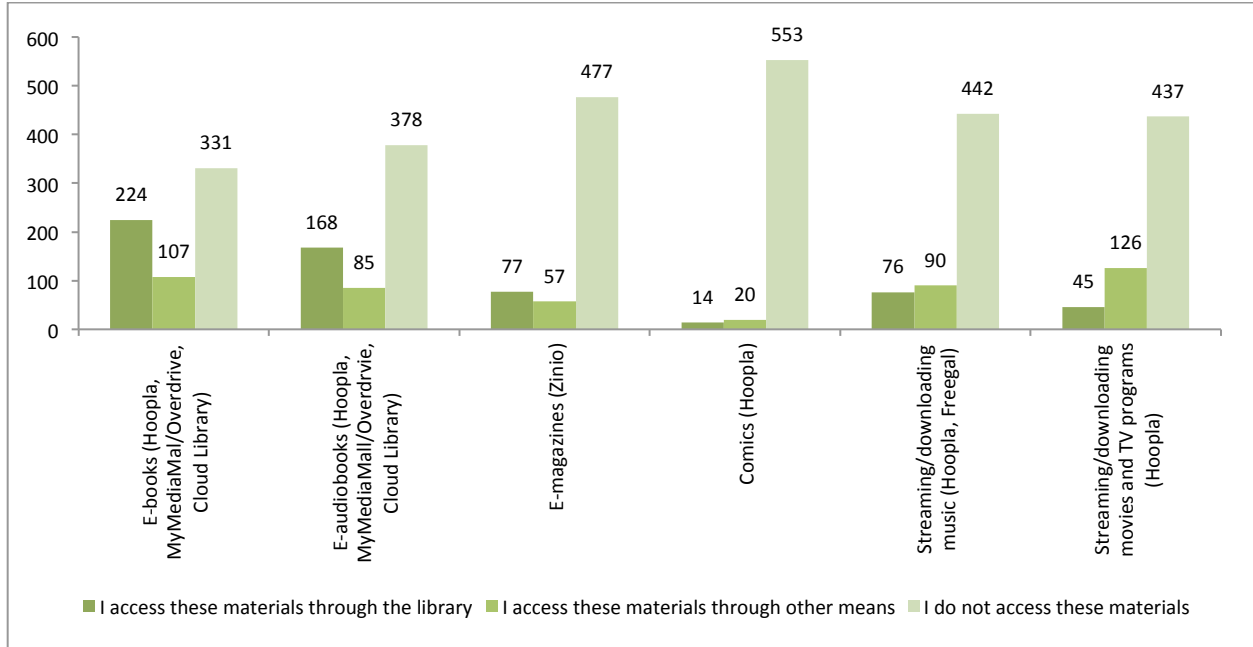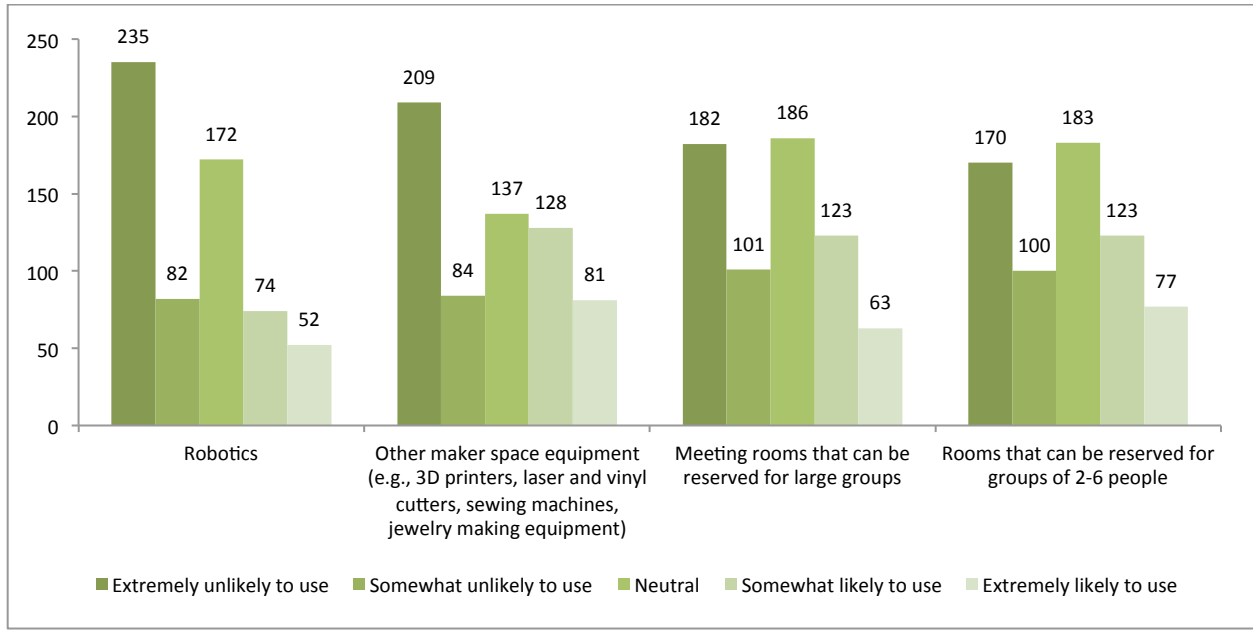

Teen Survey Respondents
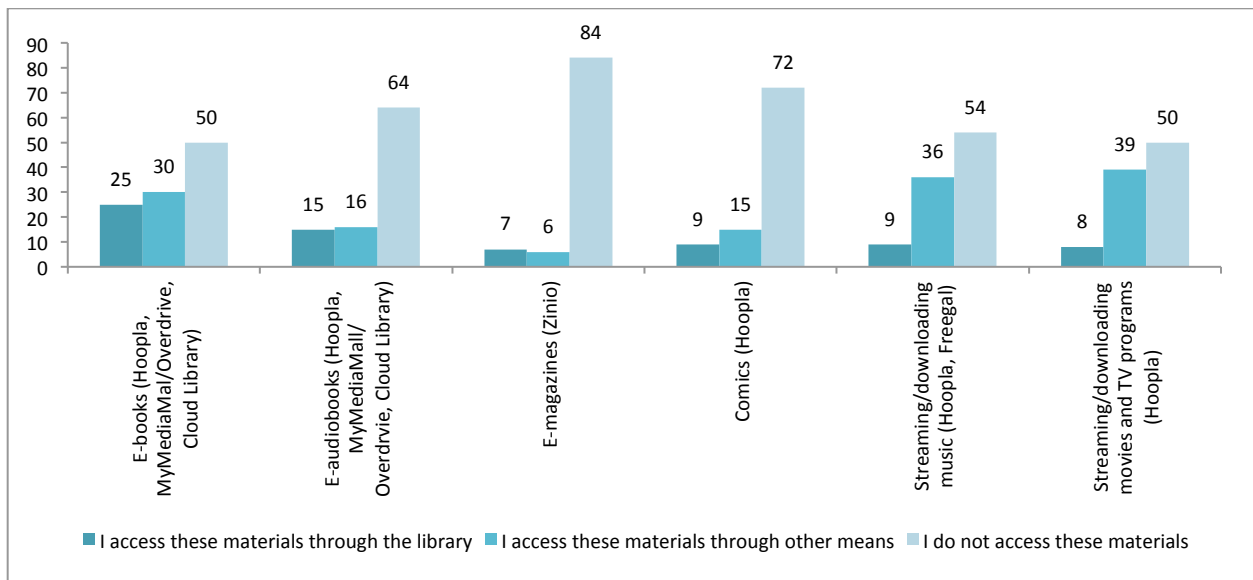
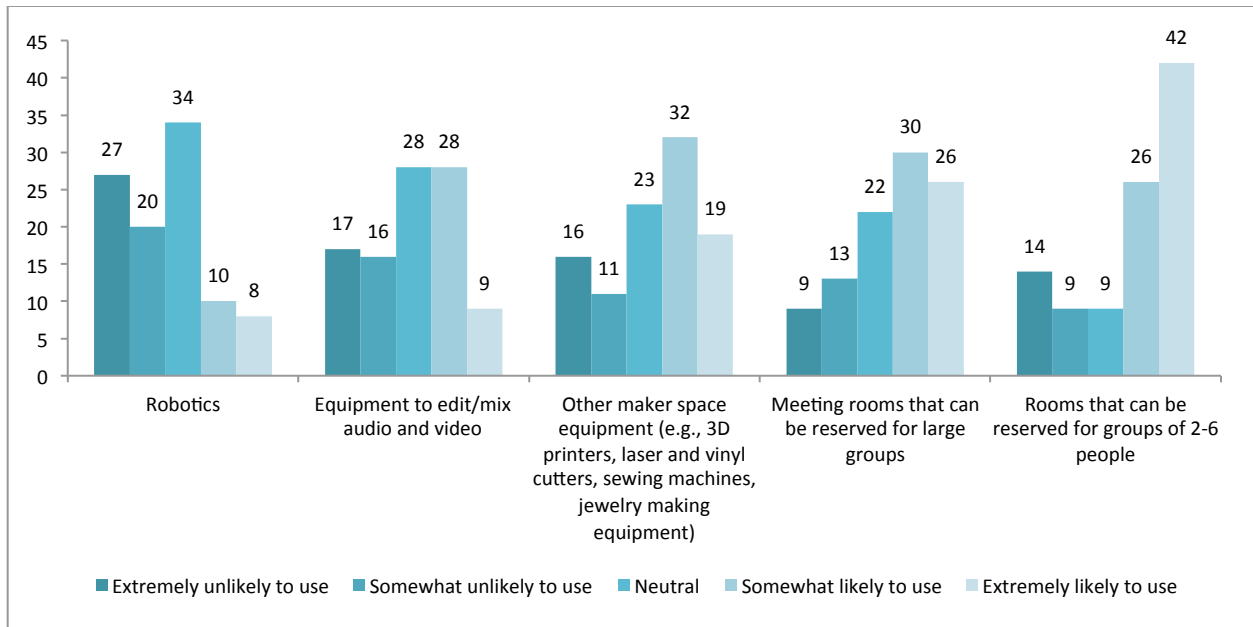## IF YOU DO USE ELECTRONIC MATERIALS, PLEASE INDICATE HOW YOU ACCESS THEM. (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

Device	Adult Survey Respondents	Teen Survey Respondents
iPhone	250	68
iPad	241	57
Kindle	123	9
Kindle Fire	45	5
Nook	24	1
Android phone	50	10
Mac computer (laptop or desktop)	172	51
PC computer (laptop or desktop)	192	25

■ Adult Survey Respondents   ■ Teen Survey Respondents

HOW LIKELY WOULD YOU BE TO USE THE FOLLOWING IF THE BUDGET AND SPACE ALLOWED FOR THEM TO BE ADDED TO THE LIBRARY?

Adult Survey Respondents

Legend: Extremely unlikely to use | Somewhat unlikely to use | Neutral | Somewhat likely to use | Extremely likely to use

	Extremely unlikely to use	Somewhat unlikely to use	Neutral	Somewhat likely to use	Extremely likely to use
Robotics	235	82	172	74	52
Other maker space equipment (e.g., 3D printers, laser and vinyl cutters, sewing machines, jewelry making equipment)	209	84	137	128	81
Meeting rooms that can be reserved for large groups	182	101	186	123	63
Rooms that can be reserved for groups of 2-6 people	170	100	183	123	77

Teen Survey Respondents

Legend: Extremely unlikely to use | Somewhat unlikely to use | Neutral | Somewhat likely to use | Extremely likely to use

	Extremely unlikely to use	Somewhat unlikely to use	Neutral	Somewhat likely to use	Extremely likely to use
Robotics	27	20	34	10	8
Equipment to edit/mix audio and video	17	16	28	28	9
Other maker space equipment (e.g., 3D printers, laser and vinyl cutters, sewing machines, jewelry making equipment)	16	11	23	32	19
Meeting rooms that can be reserved for large groups	9	13	22	30	26
Rooms that can be reserved for groups of 2-6 people	14	9	9	26	42

PLEASE INDICATE HOW STRONGLY YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

Adult Survey Respondents

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The library is relevant to the Lake Forest community.	594 (83.5%)	89 (12.5%)	24 (3.4%)	1 (0.1%)	3 (0.4%)
I would recommend the library to my neighbors.	575 (81.4%)	99 (14.0%)	22 (3.1%)	5 (0.7%)	5 (0.7%)

Teen Survey Respondents

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The library is relevant to teens in the Lake Forest community.	39 (38.2%)	45 (44.1%)	15 (14.7%	3 (2.9%)	0 (0.0%)

HOW DO YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIBRARY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)
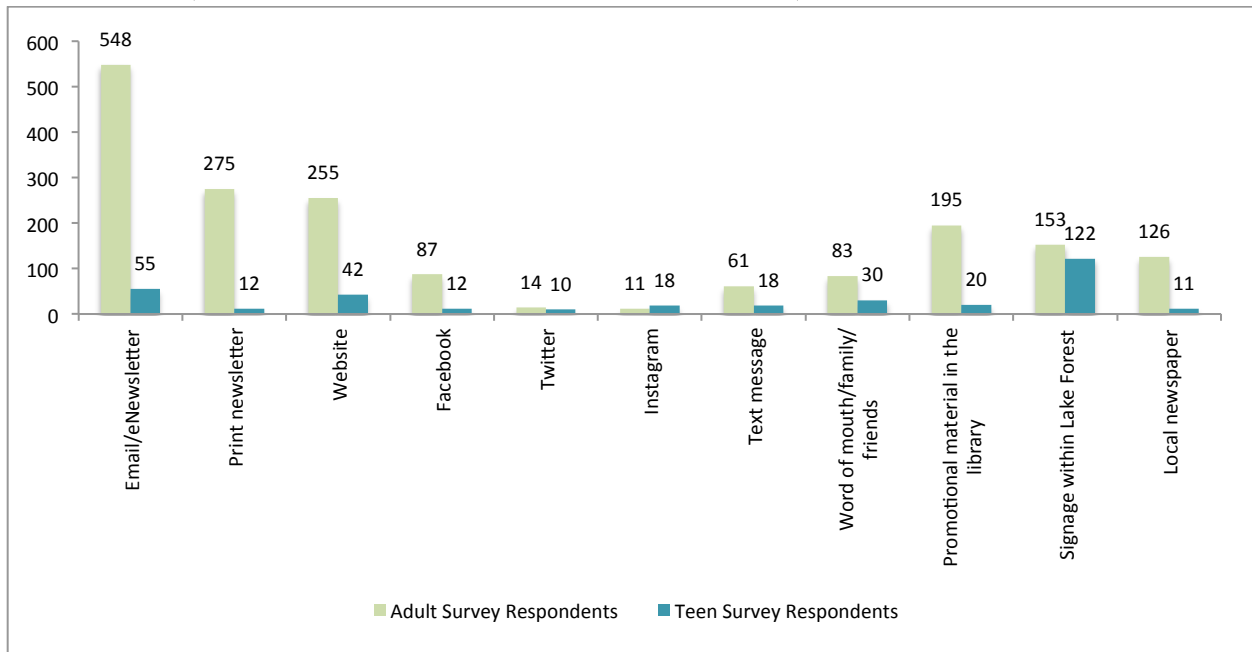
FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were held with community leaders, residents, and library staff in June 2017. Additional phone interviews were conducted with interested parties who were not able to participate in person.

RESIDENTS

Residents routinely named the following aspects of the library as its greatest strengths:
- Media lab, with some participants considering it to be a "fountain of knowledge and information,"
- Children's room and programs, calling them "phenomenal"
- Interlibrary loan access
- Staff, with many participants referring to staff as "extremely helpful," "very patient," and "always nice." One individual said, "Even if you come at the end of the day, they are still very patient and very helpful."

Areas of library operations residents would like to see improved are related primarily to accessing the building, the collection, and marketing and communications. Participants repeatedly noted that "everyone has to walk around the perimeter" of the building and that the parking and building entry configurations complicate visits for those with physical disabilities and young children. Parking was reported to be a significant challenge, with participants calling it "brutal" and "impossible when there is a program going on."

While residents strongly appreciate and value the history and "magnificence" of the library building, including its "priceless prints" and "hand painted murals," some participants felt the area dedicated to teens should be expanded, and others would like space for studying and small meetings (two to four people) to be added. Residents said, "keeping the physical and interior integrity" of the building is important, but "libraries should now be centers of teaching people."

Participants suggested the library offer programs on the following topics:
- Music (performance and informative)
- Collaborations with local bookstore to offer more author visits (children's through adult)
- Children's storytimes and programs in the evening to accommodate working parents' schedules
- Writing workshops
- Featuring community members as speakers

- Parenting topics
- Lectures
- Travel
- Photography
- Changes in technology
- Current events
- Gardening

In addition, there were several areas of the collection that residents said they would like to be expanded, including audiobooks and all materials for young adults. In addition, participants preferred that the DVD collection be organized completely alphabetically to allow for easier identification of titles. Participants reported using e-materials, particularly e-books and e-audiobooks, but felt that Overdrive was "confusing to use" and that "there need to be bigger selections." Residents would also like to see more explanation of what databases are available for public use, and whether any databases are accessible remotely, away from the library. Many participants reported having challenges regarding returning their audiovisual materials and having the catalog show that they were returned on time. Lastly, residents suggested an interest in a self checkout machine as an alternative to traditional circulation procedures rather than a replacement of staff.

Residents often suggested the library expand its use of email for communicating with patrons, including targeted emails based on individual interests and program topics. While participants received most of their information from the library newsletter, they said more frequent communications would be helpful. In addition, they felt the library website was "difficult to navigate," "looks unattended" and "in need of an update." Residents reported wanting a responsive, mobile-friendly website that makes finding relevant information simple.

When asked about non-users and Lake Forest residents who do not engage with library services, participants suggested that the "current library is good for specific life stages, but the gaps need to be filled in," echoing sentiments that the library has historically served children and older adults well. Residents would like to see a more robust marketing strategy implemented, as well as seeing the library's successes in the news more often, noting that "some people don't see the value in the library."

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Community leaders, representing local municipal and community-based nonprofit organizations, suggested one of the library's strengths is its willingness to collaborate with other organizations on shared events and programming. There was some concern that organizations throughout Lake Forest may duplicate services and programs without sufficient communication. One community leader said, "There are so many cultural organizations, so many events, so many programs – how do we all attract enough people?" She added, "Are we starting to reach a saturation point, or could some of us collaborate to get more bang for our buck?"

Community leaders noted the need for a community-wide calendar, which has been discussed in the past, to serve as a hub of information for local organizations serving residents of Lake Forest. They noted that parking continues to be a challenge at the library. Youth-serving organizations encouraged the library to continue its programs around midterm and final exams, and to continue to offer quiet space for students to study.

Community leaders added that the library is a unique asset to the community and serves as a "focal point" for arts and culture, as well as a place to access information, with one community leader referring to the library as "an architectural and art icon." Participants were complimentary of library staff and encouraged increased marketing because there are "a lot of online resources at the library that people aren't aware they can access."

LIBRARY STAFF

Library staff observed that strengths of the library include the building, which is "attractive to a lot of people" and "a rare type of library building that has this type of warmth," its ease of use, and the friendly interactions between staff and patrons. Staff added that there is an "approachability" present in the library that allows staff to provide "personalized service" and "follow-up after someone asks a question," noting that they "know many patrons by name." They felt the downtown location is "easily accessible" and that the library is a "neighborhood institution in town." The children's department also was identified as an asset to the library, for children, parents, and grandparents to visit.

Staff noted weaknesses of the library include parking, which is "inadequate," "gets complaints," and "inaccessible for the elderly and disabled;" limited adult programming, although this is increasing in quantity and breadth; and lack of private meeting space. In addition, staff felt that the library could communicate with the public more frequently about

programs and services at the library, as well as new materials that are available. Many staff members felt that "marketing is nonexistent" but saw many opportunities to improve this perceived weakness through targeted communications, social media, and increased outreach to local businesses and organizations.

Some staff members felt that some residents view the library as "antiquated," and they "would like to change this image a bit." They would like to see more use of the library by teens, noting that "no kids of young adult age want to hang out here," but realize available space is limited. Staff would also like to host more technology programs for young adults, such as sessions focused on robotics and STEM.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the survey results and feedback collected during the community focus groups, residents of Lake Forest value traditional library service as a source of learning and access to information while simultaneously appreciating the library's role in connecting the community to changing technology. Analyzing this feedback during its upcoming strategic planning process will provide the library with insights into the goals of residents and organizations to enhance the library's role as a pillar of the community services offered in Lake Forest.