New Jersey Public Library Survey

Customer Survey of New Jersey Residents About Libraries

Conducted June 2007

Potomac Incorporated
Bethesda, Maryland
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

About Potomac Incorporated

• Researching opinions and attitudes for 25 years
• Widely publicized voter surveys for media
• Studies for major corporations: Verizon, Comcast, Marriott
• Issues: Schools, health care, housing, economic development, charitable giving, traffic, higher education, energy
• Work for state public libraries
• Expertise with strategic communications
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Methodology

- Telephone survey
  - 1,800 adult residents sampled statewide
  - CATI-equipped phone center; live interviewers
  - Conducted May 23-June 6, 2007
  - Maximum statewide sampling error ± 2.3%
  - Sample balanced by gender, race and geography
  - 100+ interviews in 10 jurisdictions
  - Regional breakdowns
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Research Objectives

1. Survey New Jersey residents on perceived value of public libraries

2. Look specifically at return on investment of government dollars in public libraries

3. Provide information pertinent to public sector funders of libraries

4. Use results to brand NJLA and libraries throughout the State
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
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Research Subject Matter

• Rate local public services
• Overall impressions of public libraries
• Specific library job ratings
• Economic development impacts
• Public library funding
• Library usage
• Demographics
Research Findings

Public Library Usage
Q19. When was the last time that someone in your household visited a local public library in-person? Was it within the last week, the last couple months, last year, or longer ago than that?
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

On-Line Library Access

Home Internet Penetration = 77%

Yes, 42%

No, 53%

Not Sure/Refused, 5%

Q.20 Has anyone in your household ever accessed your local public library’s resources on-line?
Rating Public Services
Q.3 Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, or Fail as a way to rate the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in your community: A, B, C, D, or Fail?
Q.4 Using that same A through F scale, how would you rate each of these other services of your local government?…Public libraries?

- Schools’ G.P.A. = 2.8
- Libraries’ G.P.A. = 3.3
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Grading Local Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>“A”</th>
<th>G.P.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public libraries</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and public safety</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public schools</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads and mass transit</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government efficiency</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.3 Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, or Fail as a way to rate the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in your community: A, B, C, D, or Fail?

Q.4 Using that same A through F scale, how would you rate each of these other services of your local government?
### Most Desired Community Asset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Station</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Center</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All/None/Not Sure</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q. 6** *If you were moving into a new community, which of these would you most want to have on your own street or road?*
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)  
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)  

*Most Desired Community Asset: Second Choice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Station</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Center</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All/None/Not Sure</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. 7 *What would be your second choice?*
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Most Desired Community Asset: Combined

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Library</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Station</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Center</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All/None/Not Sure</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.6 If you were moving into a new community, which of these would you most want to have on your own street?

Q.7 And what would be your second choice?
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Essential Service or Cultural Amenity?

Q.8 Turning now to public libraries specifically, are you more likely to think of your local public library as (rotate): [an essential service like a school, (or more of) a cultural amenity like an art gallery]?

74% of frequent library users say “Essential Service”
**New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)**  
**New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)**

*Public Library Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borrow/check out materials and books</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the Internet/Accessing on-line catalog</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring a child for homework or a program</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research/Find reference information</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read newspapers/Magazines/Books</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend adult program/Classes and training</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community activities/Attend meetings</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q.9** Can you name two services that your local public library performs?
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)  
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Public Library Job Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good job</th>
<th>Could do better</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branch close enough</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being open when you want to visit</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to website and on-line catalog</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large enough collection</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most updated collection</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.10. When you think about your local public library, would you say it does a good job or could do a better job at each of these?

A. Having a branch close enough to your home or work
B. Being open when you want to visit
C. Having access to website and on-line catalog
D. Having a large enough collection of books and materials
E. Having the most updated collection of books and materials
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Importance of Public Library Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provided</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large enough collection</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most updated collection</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being open when you want to visit</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch close enough</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to website and online catalog</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q.11 I would like to read you that list again, and for each one please tell me if it is very important, somewhat important, or not very important to you.

A. Having a large enough collection of books and materials
B. Having the most updated collection of books and materials
C. Having a branch open when you want to visit
D. Having a branch close enough to your home or work
E. Having access to the website and online catalog
Economic Development
Q.12 Do you think that having a public library located very close to your own home would: increase or decrease property values, or would it make no difference?
Economic Anchor

Q.13 Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Having a public library located within a community helps to attract good business to the area.

Agree, 53%

Disagree, 39%

Not sure, 8%
Q.14 And do you agree or disagree with this idea? Public libraries improve a community by helping people learn new skills so they can get better jobs.

- Agree, 80%
- Disagree, 18%
- Not sure, 2%
Q.15 Do you agree or disagree? Public libraries help people learn new things no matter what their age.

Agree, 95%

Disagree, 5%

Not sure, 1%
Public Library Funding
Q.16 Generally, do you think public libraries are a good investment of your tax dollars, or do you think those taxes would be better spent in other ways?

90% of frequent library users see them as a good investment.
Q.17 If you knew that public libraries in New Jersey typically receive less than 2 percent of the overall community and school’s budget, would you think this was enough, or would you think more money should be invested in public libraries?
Q.18  If you knew that public libraries in New Jersey typically receive less than one tenth of 1 percent of the state's budget, would you think this was enough, or would you think more money should be invested in public libraries?
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Conclusions

• Public libraries are being extensively used – in-person and on-line
• Rate at the very top of local public services
• People want to live near libraries, as an amenity
• Most view local libraries as essential
• Positive performance scores, on matters important to consumers
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Conclusions

• Consumers want larger and current collections, and expanded hours
• Many see positive economic impacts from libraries
• Libraries are viewed as a solid public investment
• Large majorities want more public money spent on libraries
• Public library system in New Jersey is heavily used and extremely well-regarded
New Jersey Library Association (NJLA)
New Jersey Public Library Survey (June 2007)

Conclusions

• Few institutions can match such a positive image, strong performance evaluation and cost-benefit analysis

• This story must be told aggressively

• Collaterals, bookmark, posters, ads

• Hold local media press conferences – report results with local angle, with state legislators and other support groups to make “critical funding case”