
Macomb Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Survey of Patrons

An Executive Summary

Introduction.

During the summer of 2006, patrons of the Macomb Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped had a unique opportunity. They were contacted at home by telephone and asked to participate in a survey that enabled them to share their thoughts about Library services and to react to some possible changes at the facility.

The survey was valuable to staff as well as the patrons themselves. Among other things, the survey:

- provided staff with data about the types of services patrons use and what patrons think about those services;
- allowed staff to collect data that will help weigh the merits of expanding services ... services that may ultimately benefit patrons themselves if implemented;
- enabled patrons to voice their opinions about Library services and to offer suggestions for change; and,
- informed patrons about Library services that many did not know were available.

Three-hundred four patrons took advantage of this opportunity to share their views. Their individual responses were tallied by the Macomb Intermediate School District's Communication and Management Training Department and combined to provide a profile of what patrons think as a group. To help ensure that the needs of *all* the groups the Library serves are being met, data related to the patron's age, handicapping condition and locale were incorporated into the data report. Individual responses remained anonymous.

The report which follows details what patrons had to say.

The Quality of Library Services.

An overwhelming 97% of the patrons polled called the overall usefulness of the Library either “excellent” or “good.”

The following tables show results from all 304 patrons who were surveyed. The first chart also shows breakdowns by subgroups based on the type of handicapping condition the person has. The other one shows responses by age. As the charts indicate, the greatest number of “excellent” ratings came from patrons who have visual impairments (80%) or are ages 60 to 79 (83%).

Overall Usefulness of the Library

	All Patrons	Blind	Visual	Physical	Reading Disability
# respondents:	304	77	144	25	58
excellent	74%	77%	80%	64%	60%
good	23%	22%	17%	32%	35%
poor	1%	1%	1%		
no response	2%		2%	4%	5%

	ages 5-19	ages 20-39	ages 40-59	ages 60-79	age 80 or over
# respondents:	46	34	49	80	90
excellent	67%	74%	61%	83%	78%
good	28%	24%	35%	16%	20%
poor			2%	1%	
no response	4%	3%	2%		2%

A similar question enabled patrons to rate the courtesy and helpfulness of Library staff. An overwhelming 94% of those polled rated the staff as “excellent” or “good.” **No one** rated the staff as “poor.”

The next two tables show results from the total group of patrons, as well as breakdowns by subgroups based on disability and age.

The Staff's Courtesy and Helpfulness

	All Patrons	Blind	Visual	Physical	Reading Disability
# respondents:	304	77	144	25	58
excellent	79%	78%	81%	76%	76%
good	16%	18%	12%	24%	17%
poor					
no response	6%	4%	8%		7%

	ages 5-19	ages 20-39	ages 40-59	ages 60-79	age 80 or over
# respondents:	46	34	49	80	90
excellent	83%	74%	78%	81%	78%
good	11%	21%	20%	16%	13%
poor					
no response	7%	6%	2%	3%	9%

Library Strengths.

Books on tape topped the list of what patrons like best about the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. More than one-third of those surveyed (36%) named books on tape the “single best thing” about the Library.

Another 11% said they like *everything*, including *having the service available to them*. Nine percent like the *delivery* of materials they want and an equal number (9%) call the *variety of materials and resources* available to them their favorite thing. Rounding out the list of the top five responses was *the staff*, mentioned by 8% of those polled.

Half of the patrons have left a message on the Library’s answering machine. Of those, 61% were satisfied with the amount of time it took someone to get back with them; 12% didn’t say.

Library Challenges.

More than one-third of the patrons (34%) said *there are no problems* when asked to name the “single biggest problem” with the Library for the Blind. Another 38% could not think of anything that was wrong.

The only responses that garnered more than 1% of the total response each were those shown on the following table:

Single Biggest Problem

	All Patrons	Blind	Visual	Physical	Reading Disability
# respondents:	304	77	144	25	58
no problems	34%	42%	35%	40%	16%
book-related	5%	4%	4%	8%	5%
equipment quality/defects	4%	1%	5%	8%	2%
items unavailable	4%	3%	4%		5%
audio/tape related	3%	5%	1%		5%
delivery/returns	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%
ordering	2%	1%	2%		3%
no response	38%	33%	38%	40%	45%

Learning about Library Services.

One of the challenges facing the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is how to increase awareness about Library services among the members of the community who could benefit from its services.

Current patrons (27%) said a friend, relative or acquaintance told them about the Library. Health-care professionals (23%) have also been instrumental in passing the word, according to those polled. Other important information sources include schools (15%), a public library (12%), or an agency (11%).

The Library's newsletter is designed to help keep people who are already patrons in tune with what the facility has to offer. Sixty-nine percent of those polled said they find the newsletter either "very" or "somewhat" helpful. Seven percent said they don't receive it.

Less than half the patrons (47%) have a computer with Internet service accessible to them at home. Another 13% have a computer, but no Internet connection. Forty percent—122 people—don't have a computer at all. Computer availability is inversely proportionate to the patron's age. Only 14% of the 80 or over group has a computer with Internet access; 91% of those ages 5 to 19 do.

Just 10% of the patrons overall said they had visited the website of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Of those 29 people, 79% rated it either "excellent" or "good."

Among online visitors, 14% said they have "no problems" with the MLBPH website. An equal number (14%) said the site is hard to navigate. Seven percent each cited problems with content, the time it takes to load, and the fact that they receive no confirmation when an order goes through.

Just 12% of respondents have searched for book titles using the National Library Service's online catalog.

Accessing Library Services.

For a person with a visual problem or a physical handicap that might make getting to a library a problem, one of the best features of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is the fact that patrons don't have to come to the Library to benefit from its services. In fact, 42% of the patrons polled said they have *never* visited the Library in person and another 31% haven't visited in over a year. Five percent had visited within a week of the survey, another 5% within the last month, and 18% within the last year.

For the 127 patrons who have *never* visited in person, the main reason is "lack of transportation" mentioned by 35% of the non-visitors. Twenty-three percent said they're physically unable and 17% said they don't need to visit because they can get everything they want from the Library without going there.

Patrons said they most often access materials by calling on the telephone (47%), sending a request through the post office (28%), going in person (16%), or by sending a helper (10%).

Use of Specific Services.

Patrons were also asked whether or not they had used specific services offered by the Library. The table which follows shows the services about which patrons were asked and the number of patrons who said they had taken advantage of the service offered.

Use of Library Services

	All Patrons	Blind	Visual	Physical	Reading Disability
# of respondents	304	77	144	25	58
Books on tape	84%	90%	79%	80%	91%
Large print books	29%	16%	40%	20%	21%
Magazines on cassettes	26%	44%	18%	28%	22%
Descriptive videos	23%	36%	18%	36%	14%
Library's referral service	10%	10%	8%	16%	12%
Kits for students w/reading disabilities	9%		5%		36%
<i>Newsline</i> (newspaper by telephone)	6%	13%	4%	4%	2%
Computer w/assistive technology software	5%	3%	5%		9%
Material printed in Braille	4%	8%	4%		
CCTV (enlarges print, displays on screen)	4%	4%	6%		3%
Borrowed magnifying glasses	2%	1%	3%		
Book discussion kit	1%		2%		

For this same set of questions, when interviewers told patrons the possible options for answering, they instructed clients to indicate if they were not aware that the service was even offered.

The following table presents the same list of services, this time showing the number of people who, prior to the survey, did not know the service was offered:

Did Not Know About the Service

	All Patrons	Blind	Visual	Physical	Reading Disability
# of respondents	304	77	144	25	58
Books on tape	1%		1%		1%
Large print books	3%	4%	2%		5%
Magazines on cassettes	7%	5%	7%	4%	12%
Descriptive videos	9%	9%	11%		9%
Library's referral service	12%	14%	12%	12%	10%
Kits for students w/reading disabilities	14%	14%	12%	12%	17%
<i>Newsline</i> (newspaper by telephone)	16%	12%	16%	16%	19%
Computer w/assistive technology software	12%	10%	9%	20%	16%
Material printed in Braille	1%	1%	1%		2%
CCTV (enlarges print, displays on screen)	13%	8%	11%	16%	21%
Borrowed magnifying glasses	17%	16%	20%	8%	16%
Book discussion kit	16%	18%	13%	12%	24%

Interest in Possible Expanded Services.

Patrons also were asked about their interest in some additional services the Library might consider offering. The next chart lists those possibilities and what patrons had to say about their interest in each. As the table demonstrates, there's considerable interest in books on CD, with almost two-thirds of the patrons (63%) saying they'd check one out if the Library offered them.

Patrons Interested in Expanded Services

	All Patrons	Blind	Visual	Physical	Reading Disability
# of respondents	304	77	144	25	58
books on CD	63%	57%	56%	64%	86%
speakers on disability-related topics	39%	38%	38%	28%	48%
movies during the early evening	25%	17%	22%	28%	41%
movies during the day	22%	14%	25%	24%	24%
computer club	16%	14%	11%	16%	33%
online book discussions	12%	8%	11%	20%	17%

Expanding Hours of Operation.

If the Library were to stay open until 9 o'clock one night a week, it would be more convenient for 42% of those polled, with interest highest (81%) among those with reading disabilities.

Among those who said one late night would be more convenient, Wednesday was the night favored by slightly more people than the other evenings as the following table shows:

Expanded Evening Hours

Preference	
Monday	15%
Tuesday	5%
Wednesday	19%
Thursday	16%
no preference	45%

The possibility of being open on Saturday drew a similar response: 41% would find it more convenient if the Library were open during the day on

Saturdays. Interest was again highest (69%) among those with a reading disability.

The following graph shows how preferences for both Saturday and expanded evening hours varied, based on the client's age:

Interest in Saturday Hours and Later Hours One Night a Week

Changing the Name of the Library.

The majority of patrons (88%) said the name of the Library—the Macomb Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped—is fine and does not need to be changed. Just 24 *people* (8%) said it needs to be changed. Of those:

- 7 said the name should be shorter
- 6 just said it should be changed, but didn't offer any suggestions
- 5 want a

5 - 19	20 - 39	40 - 59	60 - 79	80 or	
years	years	years	years	over	clientele
Age					
- 4 want to replace "handicapped" with "special needs"
- 2 want a more positive sounding name

And Other Things ...

A final question gave respondents the opportunity to say anything they liked about the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and its services.

The top response (13%) reflected satisfaction with the Library and its services in general. Six percent offered kudos to the staff. An equal number (6%) mentioned the importance of the service or voiced concerns about the service being dropped. Three percent indicated satisfaction with a specific service; 2% mentioned books on CD. All other responses garnered less than 1% of the total response each. Sixty percent didn't offer another comment.

About the Patrons Polled.

Forty-two percent of the patrons polled were males; 58 percent were females. The following tables provide more details about the people who participated in the survey:

Age	
5 to 9 years	1%
10 to 17 years	12%
18 to 19	2%
20 to 29	7%
30 to 39	5%
40 to 49	7%
50 to 59	9%
60 to 69	7%
70 to 79	19%
80 to 89	24%
90 or over	5%
unknown	2%

Handicapping Condition	
visual	47%
blind	25%
reading	19%
physical	8%

Years as a MLBPH patron	
less than one year	9%
1 to 5 years	48%
6 to 10 years	21%
11 or more years	22%

Place of residency (based on Zip codes)	
Bruce, Ray, Washington, Armada, Richmond, Riley	5%
Chesterfield, New Baltimore, New Haven, Macomb	13%
East Detroit, Fraser, Roseville	13%
Clinton Township, Mount Clemens	19%
St. Clair Shores, Harrison	15%
Sterling Heights	11%
Warren, Center Line	17%
Shelby, Utica	7%

About the Survey.

The instrument was designed through the cooperative efforts of the Macomb County Library, the Macomb Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and the MISD's Communication and Management Training

Department. It consisted of 39 questions asked of respondents, plus four demographic questions—age, disability, zip code and gender—completed by interviewers from Library records.

Interviews were completed by volunteers trained by Library staff using guidelines provided by Jean Kasprzyk, communication specialist with the MISD's Communication Department. The target audience was comprised of "active" patrons—the approximately 1,400 people who had used Library services within the last three years. Calls were made from the Macomb County Library between July 17 and August 17, 2006.

For patrons age 17 or under, initial contact was made with a parent or guardian. For the youngest of patrons, parents completed the surveys on behalf of their child; with parent's permission, older children answered questions themselves.

In all, 304 interviews were completed. Completion of the 304 surveys provides a confidence level of 95 percent with a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$.

Please note that percentages in this report may not equal 100 due to rounding, multiple responses, or the omission of some data.

For more information about material contained in this report, contact Darlene LaBelle, Director, Macomb County Library, (586) 286-6660, or Beverlee Babcock, Division Director, Macomb Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, (586) 286-1580.



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