

ACTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY SURVEY SUMMARY RESULTS

Overview

The Long Range Planning Committee, as part of the planning process, conducted a community-wide survey and the results are summarized below. There are 14,791 library card holders in Acton. A total of 519 survey forms were returned, representing a return of 3.5%. The figures contained in the summary should be thought of as most having been completed by adults, many representing family groups, although others were filled out by high school students.

The survey contained nine questions and six opportunities for the respondents to provide comments. The responders provided a total of 6351 comments. Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 9 offered the opportunity, particularly if their response to the question was "not satisfied". This summary does not provide copies of all the comments made, however some of the responses will contain a brief summary of the pertinent remarks. A complete copy of all individual comments has been provided to the Trustees and Library Director. Copies of the complete data and comments will also be available for review at the workshop.

Question 1. For what purpose do you use the library? (514 responses)

TABLE 1 PURPOSE OF USE

CATEGORY	RESPONSE TOTAL
New Books	321
Recreational Reading	300
General Information/Research	273
Children's Materials	255
Audiovisual Materials	212
Magazines, Newspapers	190
Personal Growth/Development	156
Consumer Information	155
Business/Career Information	140
Study/Homework	138
Meetings/Adult Programs	137
Art Exhibits	128
Own/Other Cultures	124
Children's Programs	122
Electronic Access/Training	122
Local History/Genealogy	70
Government Information	65

Approximately two-third of the responders indicated that New Books (63%) and Recreational Reading (59%) were the purposes used. Approximately half of the responders indicated General Information (53%), Children's Materials (50%) and Audiovisual Materials (41 %) were the purposes used. Approximately one-third to one-fourth of the responders indicated that Newspapers/Magazines (37%), Personal Growth/Development (30%), Meetings/Adult Programs (27%), Study/Homework (27%), Art Exhibits (25%), Children's Programs (24%) and Electronic Access (24%) were the purposes for use.

Ten percent of respondents had comments on other uses to which the Library is put. While the majority of comments repeated uses identified by the survey, leisure, meditation, quiet workspace, personal enjoyment, playground and a place to go with the children were also listed.

Question 2A. Indicate your satisfaction with the individual collections. (503 responses)

TABLE 2A shows the total number of responders by category of satisfaction shown for each category. The ratio column gives the number of very or somewhat satisfied responders for each dissatisfied responder. For example, using rounded numbers, the category of Adult Fiction is 37 satisfied responders for one dissatisfied responder.

TABLE 2A SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

CATEGORY	VERY-SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT SATISFIED	RATIO
Children's Books thru Gr. 2	131	76	3	69.00
Local History/Genealogy	45	51	2	48.00
Adult Fiction	205	167	10	37.20
Newspapers/Magazines	144	107	7	35.86
Online Resources	133	121	8	31.75
Large Print	29	31	2	30.00
Children's Books Gr. 3-5	95	70	6	27.50
Adult Reference	146	126	10	27.20
Adult Non Fiction	164	179	17	20.18
Children's Reference	73	79	9	16.89
Children's Books Gr. 6-8	73	70	9	15.89
New Books	149	173	35	9.20
Young Adult (Gr. 9-12) Mat'l	73	90	19	8.58
Children's Books on CD	48	70	18	6.56
Children's DVDs	57	94	28	5.39
Recorded Music	32	91	30	4.10
Foreign Language Materials	24	40	21	3.05
DVDs(Movies)	55	165	73	3.01
Adult Books on CD	44	94	51	2.71

Of the group that responded, 50% or greater of the group checking "Very Satisfied" included Children's Books up Through Grade 2 (62%), Newspapers and

Magazines (56%), Children's Books Grade 3-5 (56%), Adult Fiction (54%), Adult Reference (52%) and Online Resources (51 %).

Conversely, the greatest percentages of people responding with "Not Satisfied" were the categories of Adult Books on CD (27%), DVDs (25%), Foreign Languages (25%), Recorded Music (20%). It should be noted that Children's DVDs (16%) and Children's CDs (13%) were close behind.

35% of the responders (175) provided comments, mainly on their dissatisfaction with particular aspects of the complete collection. Many were critical of the categories of DVDs, Adult Books on CD, and New Books. This set of comments, along with all the other comments, will be given in full to the Library Trustees and the Library Director and staff.

Question 2B. Indicate your satisfaction with the Library Services. (494 responses)

Table 2B shows the total number of responders by category of satisfaction shown for each category. The ratio column gives the number of very or somewhat satisfied responders for each dissatisfied responder. For example, using rounded numbers, the category of Inter-Library Loan/Delivery is 58 satisfied responders for one dissatisfied responder.

TABLE 2B SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY SERVICES

CATEGORY	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT SATISFIED	RATIO
Building Cleanliness/Maint.	429	39	2	234.00
Circulation Services	355	76	5	86.2
Interlibrary Loan/Delivery	349	60	7	58.43
Noise Level/Gen. Atmosphere	365	99	10	46.40
Art Exhibits	174	82	6	42.67
Adult Reference/Information	218	76	7	42.00
Children's Reference	147	56	8	25.38
Meeting, Reading, Study Space	182	78	12	21.67
Adult Programs/Events	80	59	10	13.90
Computer/Internet Training	108	70	15	11.87
Children's Programs/Events	91	47	16	8.63
Hours of Operation	120	258	89	4.25

For those that responded, there is obviously great satisfaction with the building and its maintenance (91 %). Approximately three-fourths of the responders were very satisfied with Interlibrary Loan/Delivery (84%), Circulation Services (81 %) and the Noise Level and General Atmosphere (77%). The greatest (and only significant dissatisfaction) was with the Hours of Operation, of which 19% of the 476 responders indicated "not satisfied".

Of the 162 comments, 73 who checked "not satisfied" referred to the hours of operation. A further 61 responders had not checked any box as "not satisfied"; however their comments addressed a general dissatisfaction with the hours of operation.

Question 3. How would you allocate \$100 on additional materials? (455 Responses)

**TABLE 3
HOW WOULD YOU SPEND \$100 ON ADDITIONAL LIBRARY MATERIALS?**

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF MONIES ALLOCATED	AVERAGE \$ PER RESPONDENT
Adult CD, DVD, Recorded Books	18	30
Adult Fiction	14	24
Children's Books	13	25
Adult Non Fiction	13	23
Young Adult Materials	12	25
Children's CD, DVD, Recorded Books	10	22
Adult Reference Books	7	20
Magazines/Newspapers	5	15
Foreign Language Materials	4	13
Local History	3	12

The top beneficiaries were Adult CD/DVD and Recorded Books with 18% of the \$100. The next four items were all close: Adult fiction with 14%, Children's Books with 13%, Adult Non-Fiction with 13% and Young Adult Materials with 12%. Magazines and Newspapers, Foreign Language Materials, and Local History received the lowest percentages of monies allocated.

Question 4. How often do you visit the Library or use its remote access? (507 responses)

TABLE 4 FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY VISITS

CATEGORY	TOTAL RESPONSES	RESPONSE %
Several times a month	188	37
Once a week or more	159	31
Once a month	75	15
Several times a year	51	10
Less then several times a year	17	3
Never	17	3

Table 4 indicates that almost 70% of the responders visit the Library, either electronically or in person, several times a month and almost half of these people visit once a week or more frequently. Seventeen responders never visit the Library.

Question 5. How could we encourage you to use the Library more often? (499 Responses)

**TABLE 5
WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO USE THE LIBRARY MORE OFTEN?**

CATEGORY	TOTAL RESPONSES	RESPONSE %
More convenient hours	204	41
Nothing, I already use regularly	169	34
Nothing, until more free time/use another library	100	20
Publicize service/programs more	97	19
Better collections/resources	92	18
Provide programs/materials/service Of interest to me	56	11
More helpful staff	25	5
More pleasant environment	13	3

The 499 responders gave a total of 756 responses. Over half (54%) indicated that nothing could be done to encourage them to visit the Library more frequently; 34% in their estimation, use the Library regularly, 19% do not have sufficient free time and 1 % use a different library. Nevertheless, 41 % of the responders were looking for more convenient hours and 18% sought better collections/resources.

A total of 56 comments included the desire for more hours, better collections, the addition of adult lecture series, a better internet service, increased ease of search from home, ability to reserve items online, and more databases available through the library internet. Other comments felt that downloadable books on tape are not useful for those with CD players or Macs, and a comprehensive summary on Library resources and services should be available. Additionally some felt that the outside grounds/play area badly needed fixing up. (These areas are under Town management, not the Library.)

Question 6. If you read or are learning to read a language other than English, would you like the library to offer books in that language? (if yes, what language?)

TABLE 6 FOREIGN LANGUAGES

LANGUAGE	TOTAL NO. OF RESPONDERS
French	32
Spanish	21
Chinese	17
Russian	8
German	7
Italian	7
Mandarin	6
School language programs	5
Japanese	4
Latin	4
Telegu	3
Chinese, simplified	2
Hindi	2
Portuguese	2

Note: In addition, Greek, Gujarati, Hungarian, Hebrew, Norwegian, and Turkish each had one listing.

Some responders listed multiple languages, thus giving a total of 127 citations and 19 languages. The most popular language was French (25%) followed by Spanish (17%) and Chinese (13%). Five responders (4%) suggested that the language programs of the local schools should be supported.

Question 7. How interested are you in the following potential library services? (488 responses)

TABLE 7 POTENTIAL LIBRARY SERVICES

CATEGORY	WEIGHTED SCORE
Library open additional hours	346
Remote access to library resources	314
Additional adult programs/speakers	258
Access to more databases	239
More computers, scanners, etc.	210
Additional programs for children 8 and up	173
Additional Young Adult programs	167
Additional programs for children age 4-7	142
More computer training	103
Additional programs for children under 4	102

Respondents could check one of five levels for each category; therefore, the results represent a weighted score of the level of interest expressed for each category. Individual averages are rounded, as appropriate.

Two of the offered potential services were of extreme interest. The one of most interest was for "Additional Library Hours," this had 266 responders (63%) who checked extremely interested or interested. The other service that elicited significant interest was for "Increased remote access to Library Resources/ Services", this was checked by 245 responders (58%) who indicated that they were extremely interested or interested. There was some interest in additional adult programs and speakers by 193 responders) (43%).

A preponderance of responders appear to feel the Library offers sufficient activity catering to the younger elements of the community (perhaps with the exception of programs for children aged 8 and up and the young adult components). It should be noted that the population projections for the 0-19 age group are predicted to fall by 7% in the years 2000 to 2010 and then fall further by 2% in the following decade.

There was little community interest in certain potential services, as shown by 269 responders (68%) to the option of additional programs for children under 4; also little interest in Additional programs for children aged 4-7 (245 responders, 60%); more computer training (204 responders, 57%) and Additional programs for children aged 8 and up (213 responders, 51%).

Of the 52 comments made by responders, several referred to the need for more hours; others to the expansion of databases available through home access; 24 hour availability to the Library server (there is 24 hour availability now); the availability of more PC stations; staff-user interactions (positive and negative); literacy-based programs where older children read aloud to younger children; the limitations of downloadable books on tape; a desire for more funds to be spent on the collections; the desire for offering some musical recitals; and expressed pleasure with the annual poetry reading.

Question 8. If you think more library hours are needed, which of the 4 options would you prefer? (419 responders gave a first choice; 395 gave a second choice.)

TABLE 8A FIRST CHOICE SELECTIONS

CATEGORY	TOTAL REPOSESES
Re-opening Thursdays 5-9 pm	156
Expanding Sunday openings to Sept. thru mid-June	144
Remaining open until 2 pm on summer Saturdays	74
Opening at 1 pm on Sunday	45

The first choice was equally divided between re-opening Thursday (156 responders, 37%) and expanding Sunday openings (144 responders, 35%).

TABLE 8B SECOND CHOICE SELECTIONS

CATEGORY	TOTAL RESPONSES
Expanding Sunday opening to Sept. thru mid-June	145
Re-opening Thursdays 5-9 pm	90
Remaining open until 2 pm on summer Saturdays	82
Opening at 1 pm on Sunday	78

The second choice clearly recommended expanding Sunday openings (145 responders (37%).

It is possible that responders may have voted for the same option as both first and second choice, since the written comments lean heavily towards expanding the Sunday opening (37%). The remaining three options were almost equally divided (19-23%).

Question 9. Additional comments about the Acton Memorial Library. (155 responses)

Of the Survey responders, 30% provided further thoughts for a total of 155 comments. Those comments not associated with other survey questions, included a number of complimentary and negative comments to staff and services, as well as to the interlibrary loan service.

Others commented on a chronic parking problem; perceived competition with video rental stores; publicity to inform students of the ability to access "Infotrac" from home; allow the children's room to have its own checkout area; an objection to requiring a library card number to access the computer; use of yellow lights instead of those "awful" white lights; better lighting for the study carrels; moving the young children's area to the back of the children's section; improving the layout of the children's section; not providing food (especially for children) and not allowing food or drinks in circulation areas; providing Wifi everywhere; the need for more PC stations; publicizing how donations of new/slightly used books could be made to the Library; having a coffee machine; better display of current paperbacks; better control of noise on the second floor and noise in the solarium; the need for the 50 cent bookcase in the lobby to be higher off the floor; the need for more study rooms; providing an e-mail notice 3 days prior to books being due; designation of an "Adults only" computer area; and separating the DVD and video collection by language.

There were also comments that desired better lighting for the playground; suggesting a fence or bushes on the side of the parking lot; and other improvements needed for the playground. As indicated earlier, the playground is under Town management, not the Library.