



Get Loud for Libraries

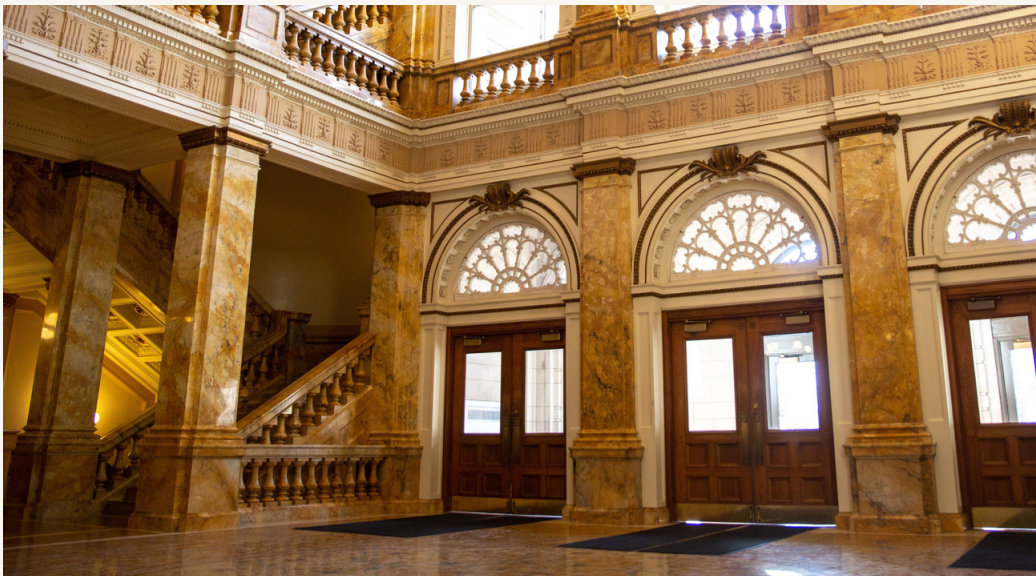
A Community Engagement Report | Published January 2024

OVERVIEW & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Project Overview

In the face of potential budget cuts looming over the City of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) embarked on a critical endeavor to ensure that any forthcoming challenging decisions would be made with the utmost consideration for the community's needs and aspirations. This report documents the comprehensive approach taken by MPL to gather community insights, aiming to inform the library's budget decisions and pave the way for future investments and innovative opportunities.

Recognizing the importance of community-driven input in shaping its future, MPL undertook an ambitious project to engage with the people it serves. By understanding the unique challenges and aspirations of its patrons, MPL sought to align its resources in a way that would continue to foster access to knowledge, education, and community enrichment.



Acknowledgments



The Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) stands as a cornerstone in our community, dedicated to nurturing healthy families and fostering dynamic neighborhoods, thereby contributing to the strength and vibrancy of Milwaukee. Their mission is to ignite inspiration by facilitating reading, learning, and meaningful connections among individuals. Through these endeavors, MPL plays a pivotal role in the cultural and intellectual enrichment of our city.



INPOWER, a Milwaukee-based Black and Woman-Led social impact agency, played a pivotal role in collecting primary data, conducting secondary data analysis, synthesizing information, and preparing the *Get Loud For Libraries! Community Engagement Report*. INPOWER deploys integrated solutions to address social challenges, working closely with community members to empower self-determined outcomes and enhance overall community wellness.

Community Partners



ACTIVITIES, METHODOLOGY & CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations

The findings in this report are based on a combination of community engagement events, surveys, and existing data sources. A notable observation from our survey data is that the majority of respondents identified as women. With respect to the information obtained at the time of library card registration, personal demographic information is not intentionally requested.

Without this information as a reference, we cannot verify if the population who responded to the survey accurately reflects the broader community population. It's important to note that while efforts were made to gather diverse perspectives, the data collected may not fully represent the entirety of viewpoints within Milwaukee.

Participation was voluntary, potentially introducing selection bias, and external data sources come with limitations in quality and timeliness. The report provides a snapshot of community sentiments, but individual experiences and evolving trends may not be entirely captured within this scope.

Methodology

This research employed a comprehensive methodology to gather insights from various stakeholders within the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) system. Data collection involved a multi-pronged approach to ensure a wide cast of perspectives and voices were captured in the analysis.

To reach community members through non-digital channels, paper surveys were distributed at all MPL locations. Furthermore, in-person conversations facilitated by INPOWER engaged a diverse range of community members and groups. Additionally, data were extracted and analyzed from MPL's internal records of previous community conversations.

To reach digital audiences, INPOWER conducted online staff surveys and digital surveys targeted at both patrons and non-patrons within the Milwaukee area. These digital surveys incorporated incentives to encourage participation.

The full range of interactions captured includes audio, text, and multiple-choice responses, which provides a rich dataset for analysis. By integrating diverse methods of data collection, the study aimed to comprehensively understand the perspectives, feedback, and needs of MPL's patrons, staff, the broader community it serves and members it has potential to reach.

ACTIVITIES, METHODOLOGY & CONSIDERATIONS

Survey Sections & Questions:

Section 1: Demographic details

This section gathers essential demographic data from patrons and non-patrons, focusing on residence, library usage, age, gender, and race, to assess the diverse characteristics and needs of the community it serves.

Section 2: MPL Programs and services

This section explores patrons and non-patrons' awareness and valuation of current and prospective library services and programs in Milwaukee to identify opportunities for expansion and refinement that aligns with community interests.

Section 3: MPL location operation preferences

This section analyzed the convenience and accessibility of the Milwaukee Public Library's current hours and locations from the perspectives of both patrons and non-patrons to identify potential adjustments to support both groups.

Section 4: Preferred communication methods

This section highlights current communication channels utilized by patrons and solicits suggestions for enhancing the library's outreach and visibility to reach a broader, more diverse community.

Section 5: MPL Value & Budget allocation recommendations

This section depicts patrons and non-patrons' sentiments on potential areas of investment, crucial areas to maintain in case of budget cuts, the aftermath of potential cuts, and showcases personal stories of the library's impact on individuals and the community abroad.

Overall Data Summary

4,378

Total Surveys

3,459

Patrons

919

Non-Patrons

43.8%

Lived Near Central
Cluster Libraries

21.2%

Lived Near North
Cluster Libraries

34.9%

Lived Near South
Cluster Libraries

450+

Attendees of
listening sessions

22

Total community
sessions

KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

In our comprehensive analysis of the survey responses, we delved deep into the feedback and perspectives of both patrons and non-patrons. This survey, administered with the aim of understanding the library's reach, efficacy, and areas for improvement, has provided a rich tapestry of insights. In the following pages, a summary of the most prominent quantitative responses from both patrons and non-patrons regarding preferred programs & services and awareness of offerings are depicted.

Preferences from The People

Based on what quantitative data said individuals value most about current programs and services.



The lead response of 19.85% ranked Summer Reading Programs as their top choice.



As the top response, 2 of every 10 survey respondents value databases as a top service.



56.22% of respondents prioritized Physical Materials as the top library program and service.



Craft Programs, Computer Classes, & Cultural Programs ranked as top community programs.



The most valued days for visits are Saturday (24.99%), Sunday (18.50%), and Wednesday (12.60%), with peak hours being early evenings from 4p-8p (29.74%) and afternoons from 12p-4p (26.44%).

Beyond The Books

Based on what quantitative data said individuals would like to see offered in the future.



16.52% of respondents ranked Government and Social Services as their top service.



11.48% of respondents ranked the Cafes in Branches as their top choice.



10.75% of respondents prioritized Music and Performing Arts as their top choice.



10.46% of respondents desire Homework Help as their top choice over other offerings identified.



8.37% of respondents identified Meal Services as their top ranked choice.



8.71% ranked Genealogy Programs and Resources as their top choice.

YA' Don't Say

Based on what quantitative data said individuals were unaware of about current programs and services.



27.98% ranked Device Checkouts (Hotspots, Chromebooks) first.



23.18% ranked Gaming as their top choice.



16.65% ranked STEAM/Makerspace Programs as their top choice.



8.74% ranked Movie Screenings above others.

LIBRARIES CREATE...

LEADERS

VISIONARIES

BUILDERS

STORYTELLERS

NAVIGATORS

EDUCATORS

INNOVATORS

CONNECTORS

MENTORS

DATA ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS



In our pursuit to craft a comprehensive understanding of the library's impact, reach, and areas of improvement, we embarked on an exhaustive examination of diverse datasets. This multifaceted analysis involves:

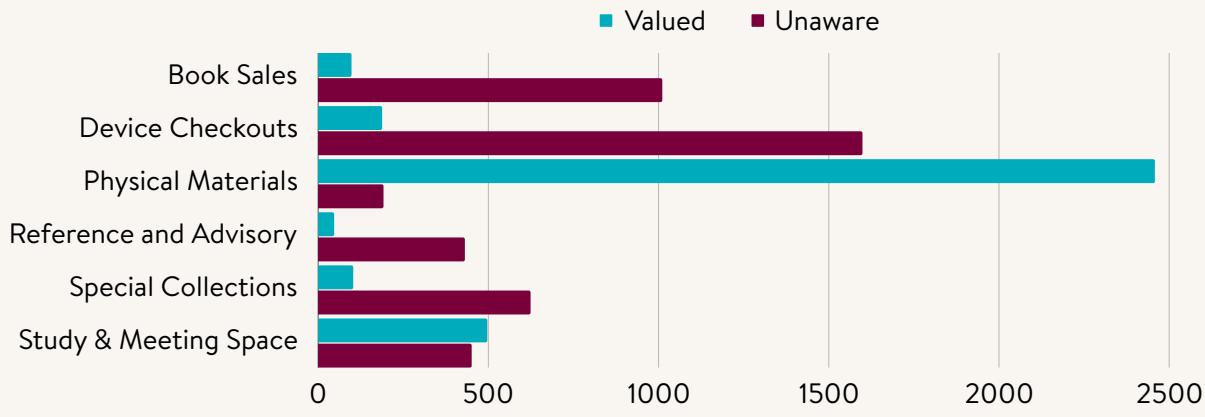
- Review of All Data: A broad overview of the survey responses.
- Patron Vs. Non-Patron Analysis: Distinguishing feedback from recent library visitors and non-visitors.
- Cluster Analysis: Feedback segmented by geographical library groupings.
- Race-Based Analysis: Insights across different racial and ethnic groups.
- Qualitative Responses: Deeper sentiments derived from open-ended answers.
- Community Conversations: Feedback from broader community interactions.

This examination offers a preview into high-level findings that serve as the foundation for our recommendations, aimed at enhancing the library's impact and engagement.

KEY FINDINGS FROM ALL DATA

In our comprehensive analysis of the survey responses, we delved deep into the feedback and perspectives of both patrons and non-patrons. This survey, administered with the aim of understanding the library's reach, efficacy, and areas for improvement, has provided a rich tapestry of insights. What follows is a synthesis of the most salient findings, drawing from the qualitative responses of our diverse respondent base.

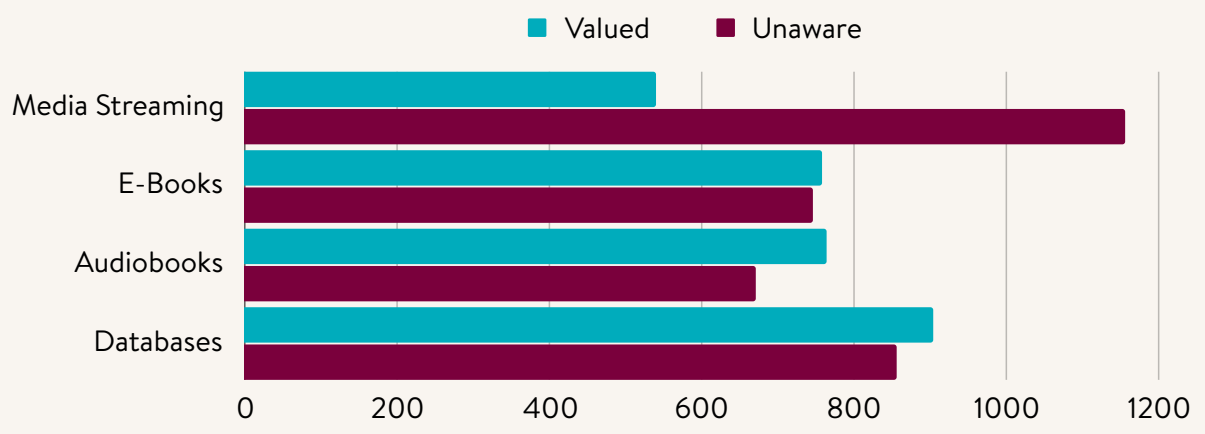
LIBRARY SERVICES AND MATERIALS



Key Finding Notes:

- The most valued service or category is Physical Materials with 2,458 votes
- Of the options provided respondents were most unaware of Device Checkouts with 1,599 votes

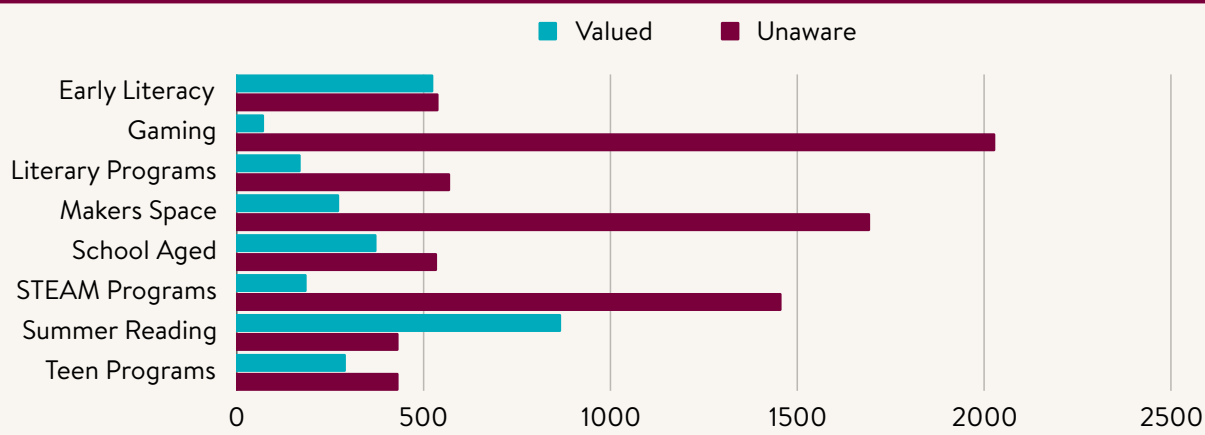
DIGITAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



Key Finding Notes:

- The most valued service or category is Databases with 904 respondents indicating value
- The service or category with the highest unawareness is Media Streaming with 1,156 respondents being unaware

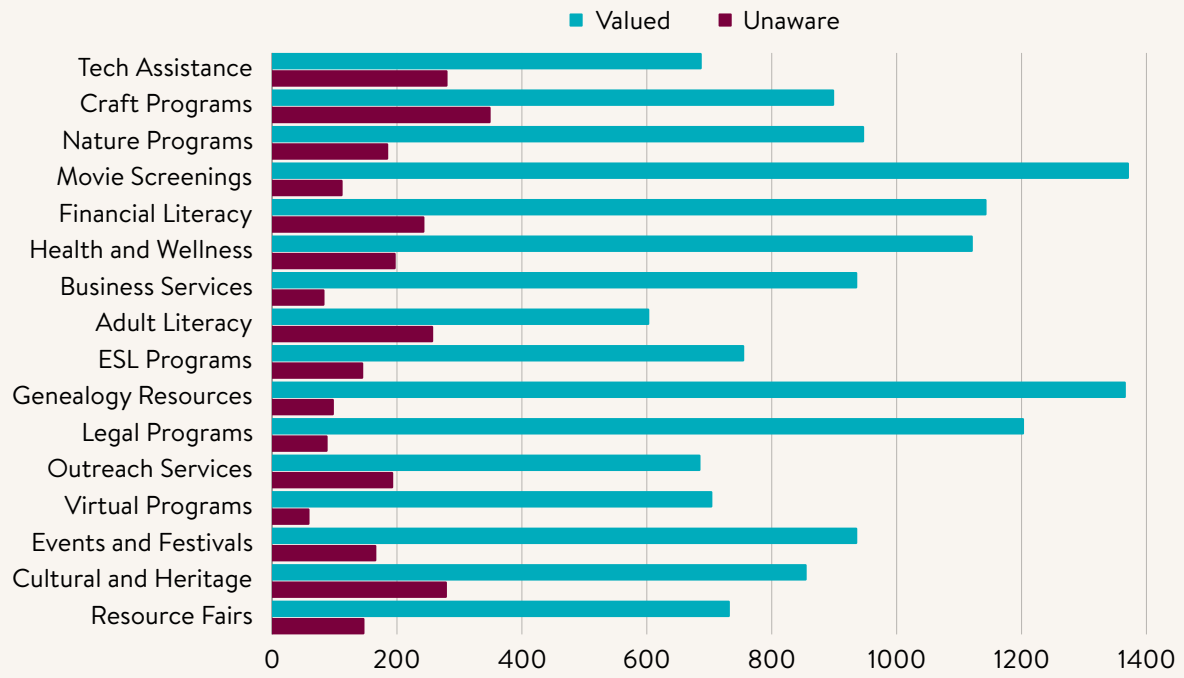
GAMING & YOUTH FOCUSED



Key Finding Notes:

- The most valued service or category is Summer Reading with 868 respondents indicating value
- The service or category with the highest unawareness is Gaming with 2,030 respondents being unaware

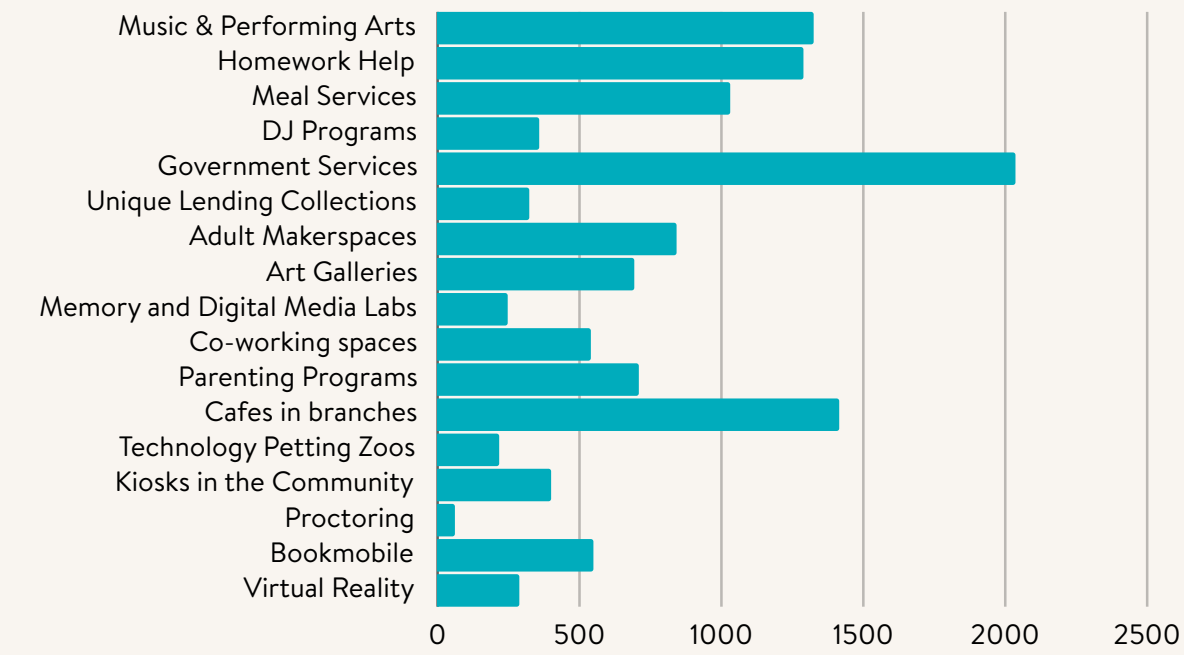
COMMUNITY & FAMILY FOCUSED



Key Finding Notes:

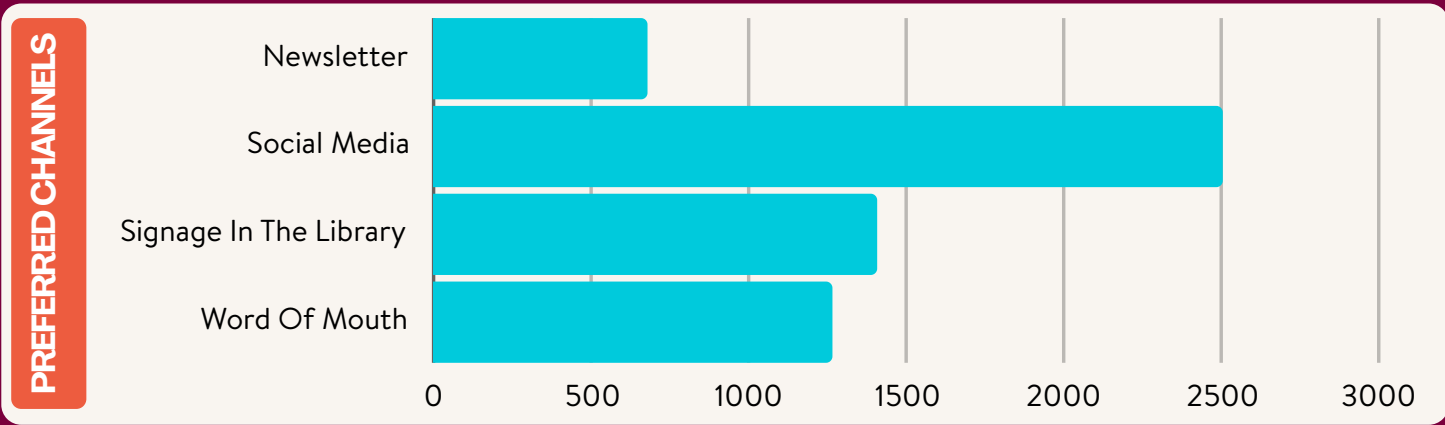
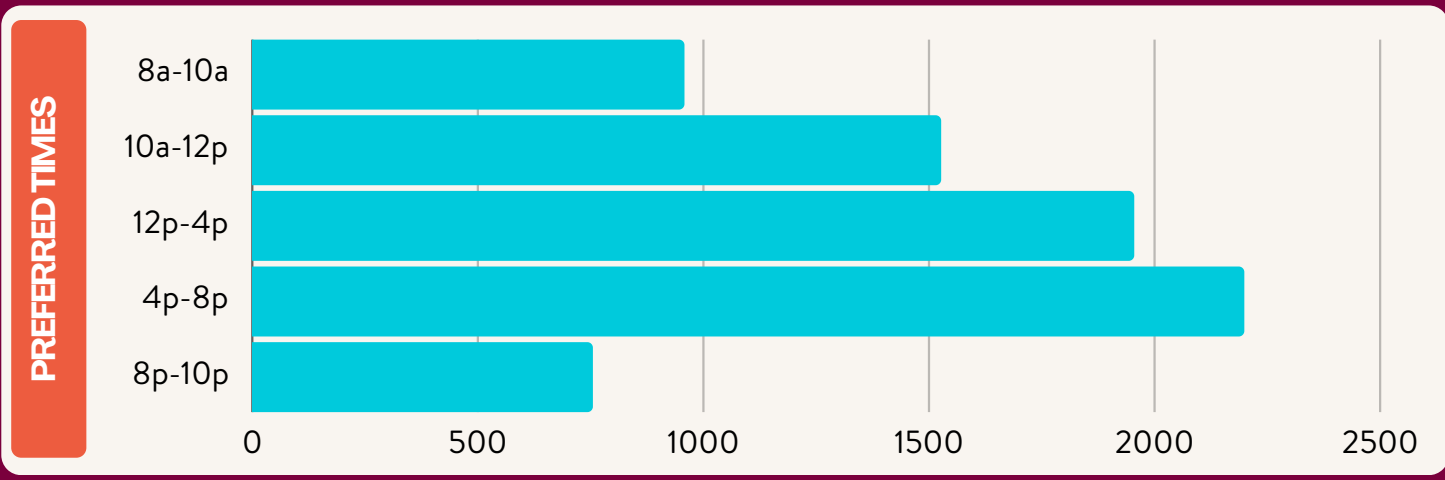
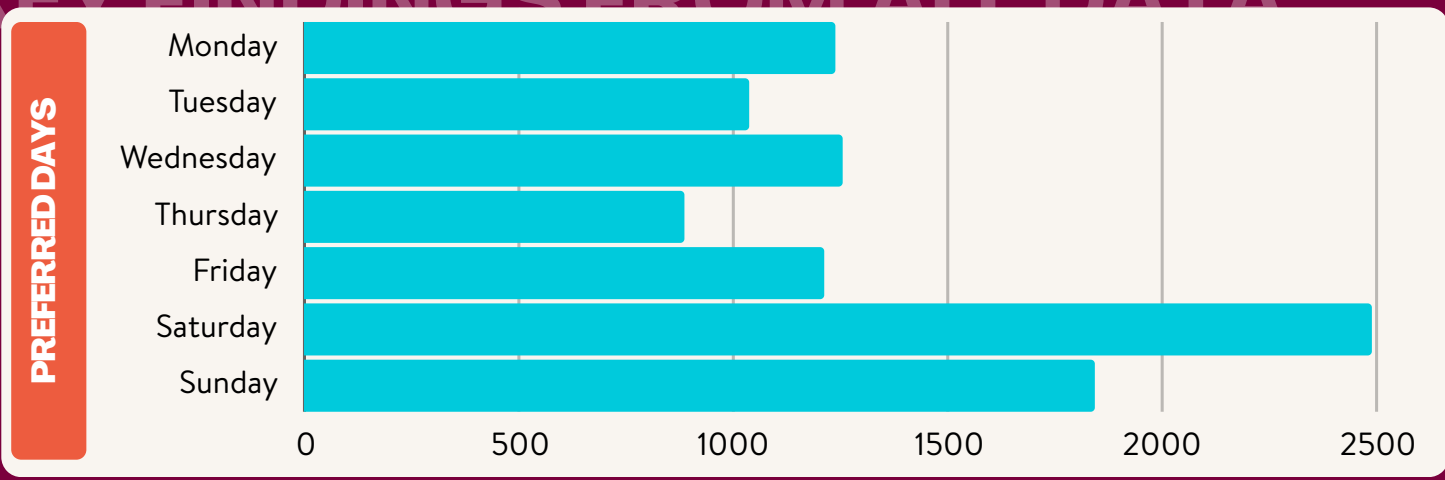
- The most valued service or category is Movie Screenings with 1,372 respondents indicating value.
- The service or category with the highest unawareness is Craft Programs with 350 respondents being unaware.

TOP PROGRAMS OF INTEREST



Key Finding Notes:

- The program with the highest interest is Government Services with 2,036 respondents indicating interest.
- The program with the lowest interest is Proctoring with 61 respondents indicating interest.



Considerations about the data in the Key Findings From All Data section:

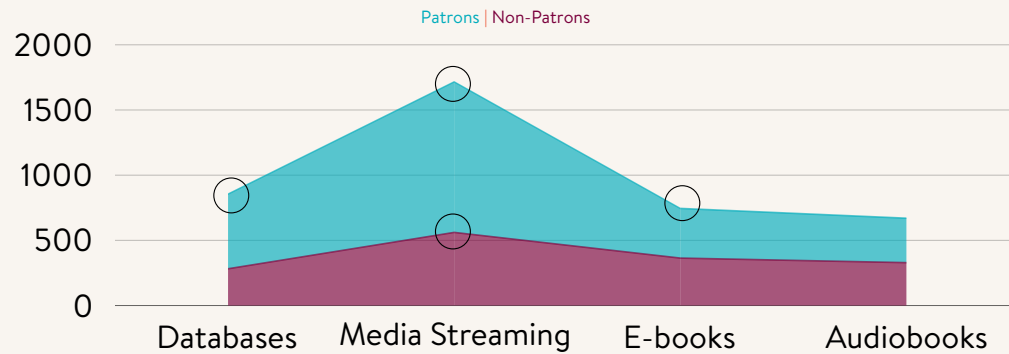
- Any responses marked as "N/A" were excluded from the data analysis to ensure relevance and clarity.
- In questions distinguishing between "aware" and "unaware" regarding library services, approximately 25%-30% of respondents indicated "I was aware of these services." While this response was omitted from certain analyses to concentrate on areas for growth and enhancement, it's noteworthy to mention that such a consistent response rate suggests the library has been effective in informing patrons about its programs and services.

COMPARATIVE SEGMENTATION: KEY FINDINGS PATRON VS. NON-PATRON

In this section, we specifically dissect the nuances between the feedback of patrons and non-patrons. A "patron" is defined as anyone who self-identified as having visited the library within the year preceding the date they completed the survey. Through this comparative analysis, we aim to highlight the contrasting perspectives, experiences, and suggestions from these two distinct groups, enabling us to draw a more granulated understanding of our library's impact and potential areas of enhancement.

PATRON VS. NON-PATRON

Of these digital programs and services, are there any you did not know we offered?

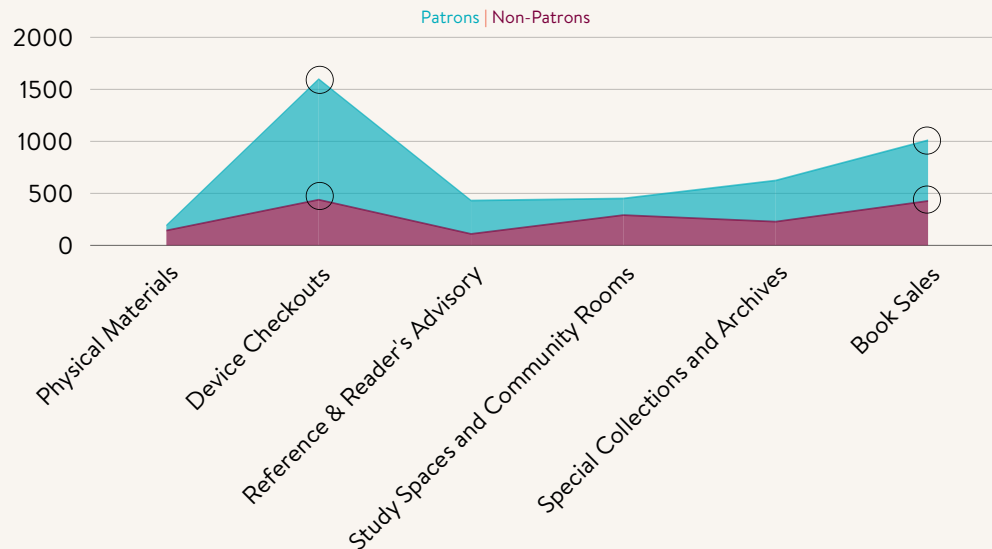


Key Finding Notes:

- Media streaming is the most identified service for both audiences
- Databases ranked 2nd for patrons and E-books ranked 2nd for non-patrons
- Significantly more patrons were unaware of Media Streaming services than non-patrons
- Both patrons and non-patrons were unaware of E-books and Audiobooks at similar rates

PATRON VS. NON-PATRON

Of these library and material services, are there any you did not know we offered?

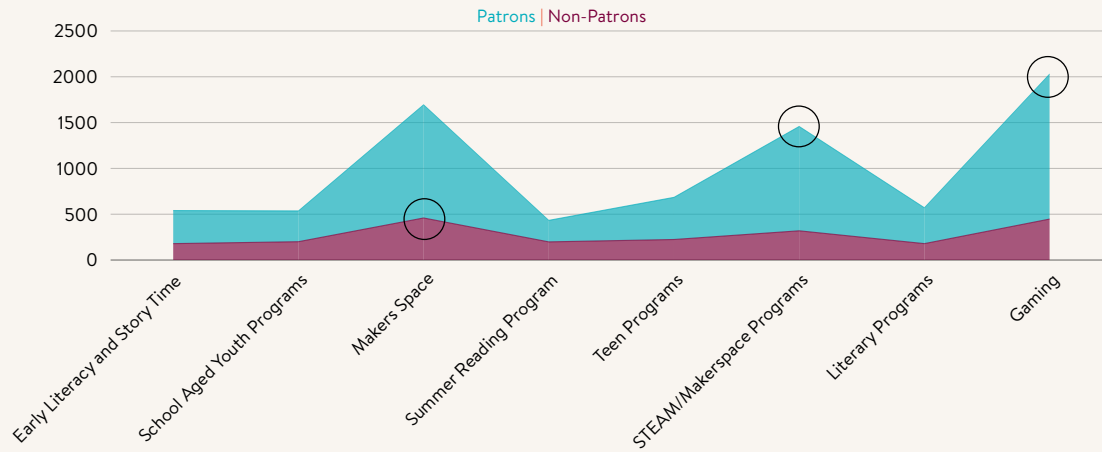


Key Finding Notes:

- Most patrons and non-patrons did not know about device checkouts and book sales
- More patrons are unaware of both book sales as well as special collections and archives than non-patrons
- Study and Community Rooms are the second least known library and material service offered, implying a higher level of awareness

PATRON VS. NON-PATRON

Of these gaming and youth-focused programs and services are there any you did not know we offered?

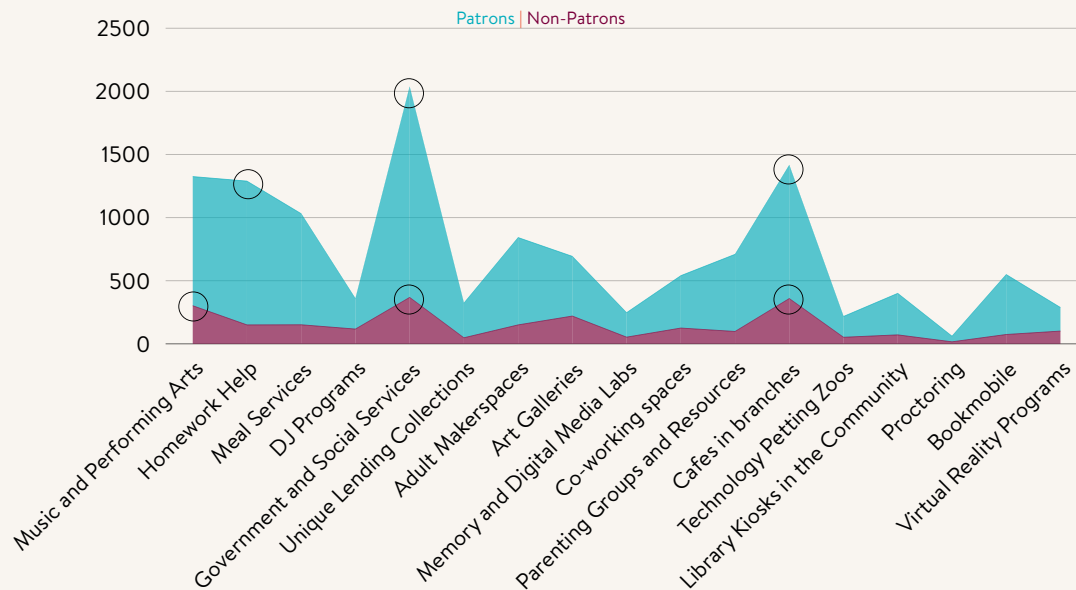


Key Finding Notes:

- Gaming was the most unknown service for patrons, while non-patrons were most unaware of Makerspaces
- More patrons are unaware of teen programs and STEAM/Makerspace Programs than non-patrons
- The level of awareness for Summer Reading Programs is consistent for both audiences

PATRON VS. NON-PATRON

Select the top 3 services you would like to see offered.



Key Finding Notes:

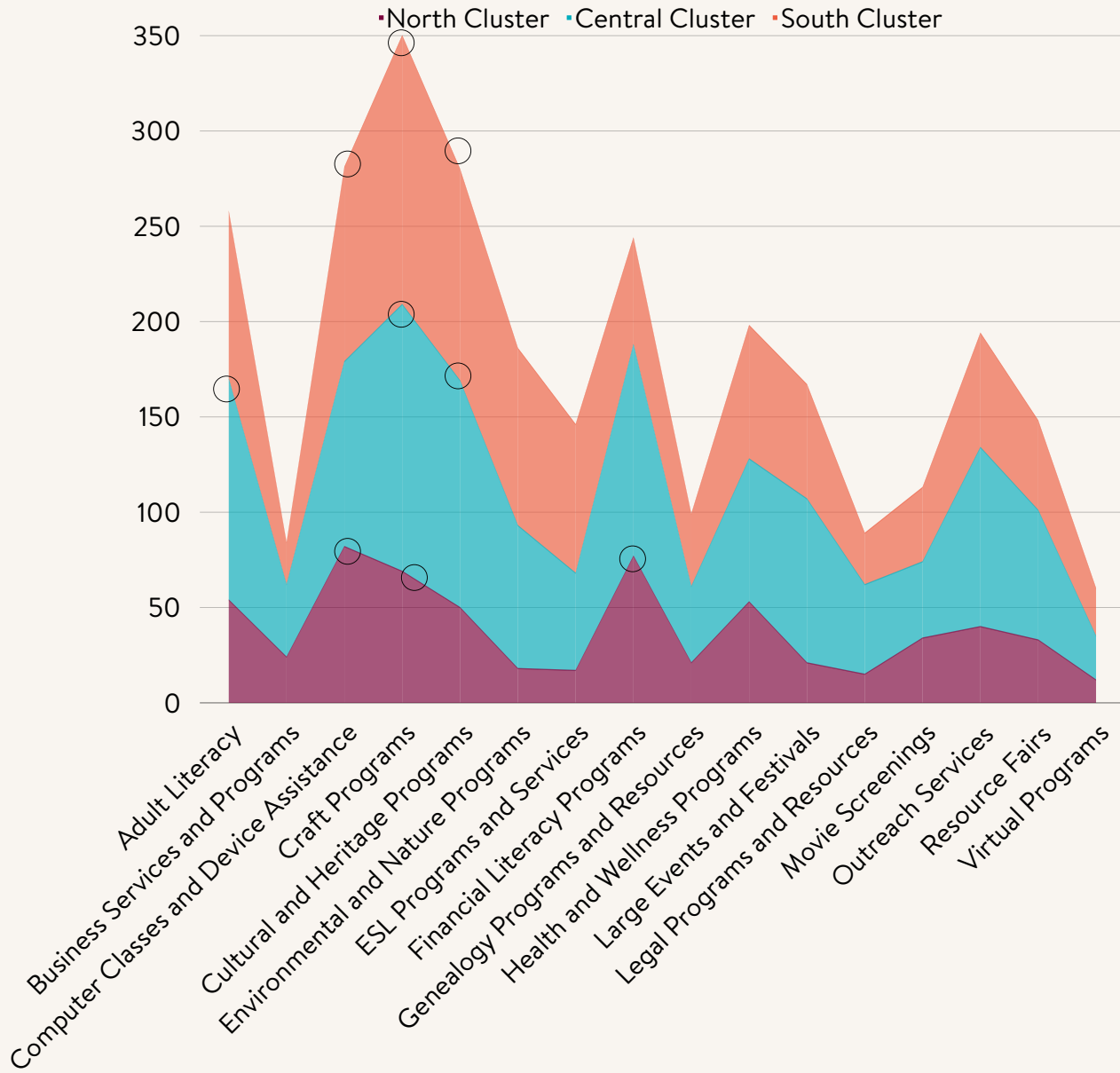
- Patrons ranked the following services: (1) Government and Social Services (2) Cafes in branches and (3) Homework Help
- Non-patrons ranked the following services: (1) Government and Social Services (2) Cafes in branches and (3) Music and Performing Arts
- More patrons prefer Adult Makerspaces and Bookmobiles

COMPARATIVE SEGMENTATION: CLUSTERS

To deepen our insights from the feedback, we divided the data into three distinct clusters based on library locations: Central Cluster: This cluster includes Central Library, Center Street Library, East Library, Martin Luther King Library, and Washington Park Library. North Cluster: Encompassing Atkinson Library, Capitol Library, Good Hope Library, and Villard Square Library. South Cluster: Consisted of Bay View Library, Mitchell Street Library, Tippecanoe Library, and Zablocki Library.

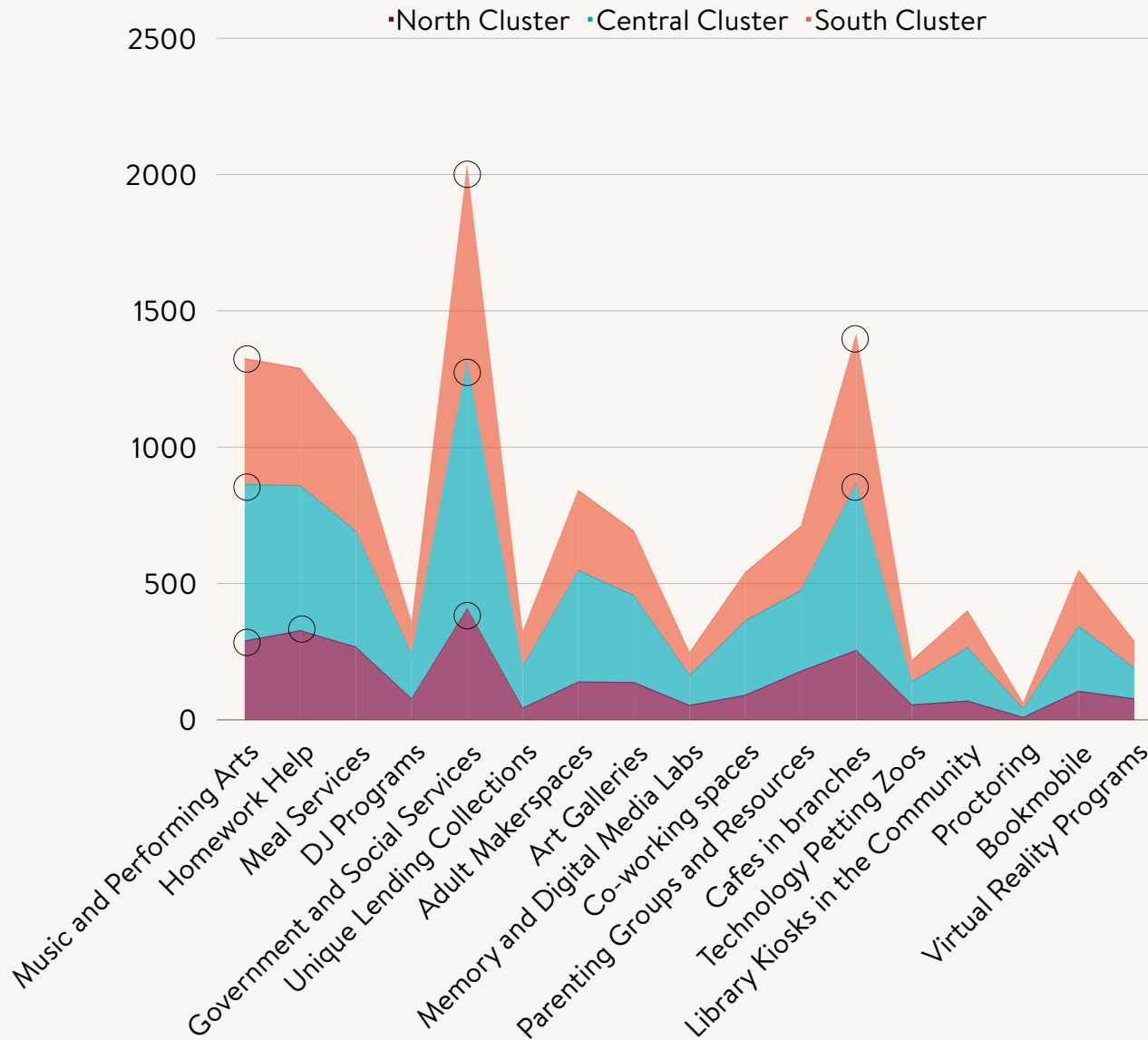
By examining these regionally-grouped libraries, we aim to pinpoint localized patterns and insights that might be obscured in a broader overview.

Please select the community and family programs and services you value most at the library.



- Key Finding Notes:**
- North Cluster most values: (1) Computer Classes & Device Assistance, (2) Financial Literacy Programs and (3) Craft Programs
 - South Cluster most values: (1) Craft Programs, (2) Cultural & Heritage Programs, and (3) Computer Classes & Device Assistance
 - Central Cluster most values: (1) Craft Programs, (2) Cultural & Heritage Programs and (3) Adult Literacy
 - Virtual Programs were the least valued service for both the North and Central Clusters, but the South Cluster least valued Business Services and Programs

Select the top 3 services you would like to see offered.



Key Finding Notes:

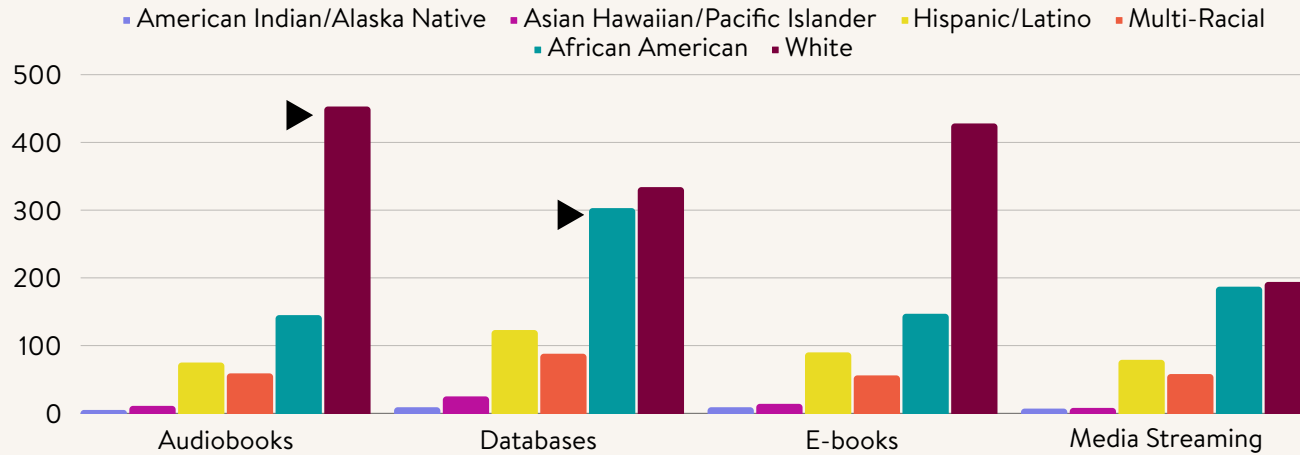
- North Cluster most values: (1) Government & Social Services, (2) Homework Help, (3) Music & Performing Arts
- South Cluster most values: (1) Government & Social Services (2) Cafes & Branches, (3) Music & Performing Arts
- Central Cluster most values: (1) Government & Social Services (2) Cafes & Branches, (3) Music & Performing Arts
- Central Cluster is more interested in Adult Makerspaces than the others
- The North and Central Clusters have comparative levels of interest in Bookmobiles, while less interest is present in the South Cluster

COMPARATIVE SEGMENTATION: RACE

In our dedication to capturing the varied experiences of our diverse library user base, we meticulously analyzed survey responses based on race. Respondents identified their race as one of the following: African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Multi-Racial, or White. By examining feedback through this racial lens, we aim to foster inclusivity, discern unique experiences, and address specific needs pertinent to each racial and ethnic group.

RACE COMPS

Please select the digital programs and services you value most at the library.

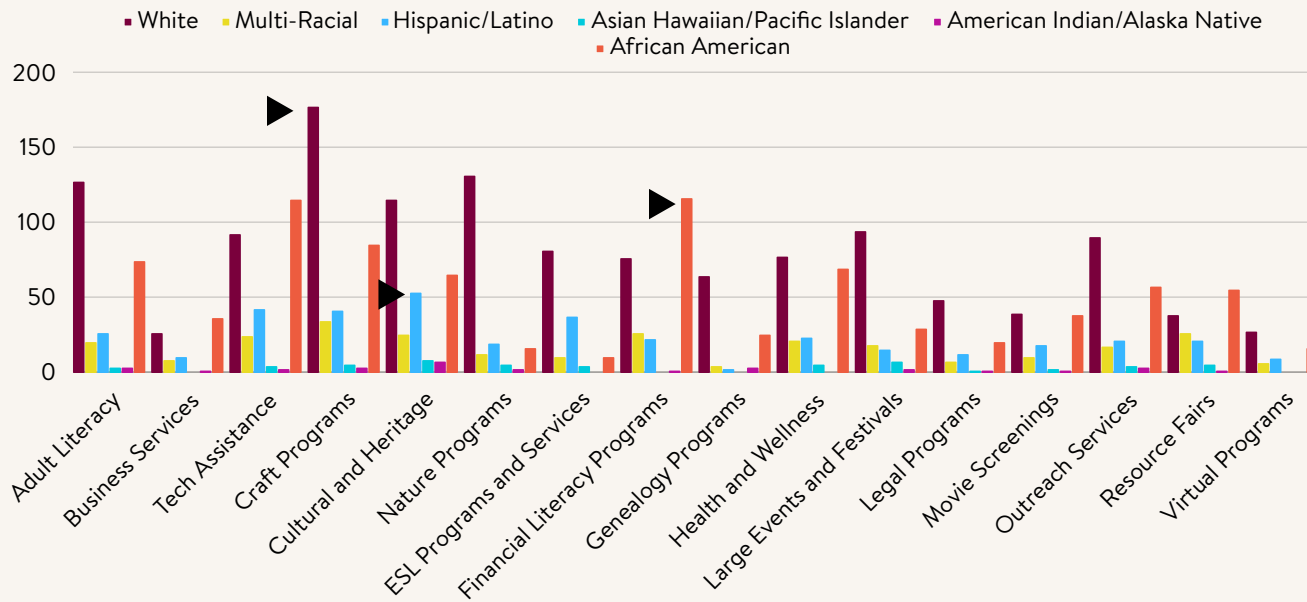


Key Finding Notes:

- White people valued Audiobooks the most; all other groups valued databases the most
- African-Americans had the widest gap between their top two choices than all other groups, with database as their top selection
- American Indian/Alaska Native people were consistent in voting among all options

RACE COMPS

Please select the community and family programs and services you value most at the library.



Key Finding Notes:

- American Indian, Asian and Hispanic preferred Cultural and Heritage Programs Most
- White people valued Craft Programs the most
- African Americans valued Financial Literacy Courses the most

THEMATIC FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE RESPONSES, LISTENING SESSIONS, & EVENTS

To further our pursuit of capturing the community's perspective of the Milwaukee Public Library, we gathered direct feedback from community members regarding their current engagement, opportunities to better reach diverse communities and considerations for future investment. Below, you'll find a summary of the qualitative themes elevated from these robust conversations and survey responses.

MAIN REASON YOU HAVE NOT VISITED THE LIBRARY



Lack of Time or Busy Schedule

"I currently work 2 jobs and have a 5-month-old baby."

Availability To Online Resources

"Books are now online or I just buy the books I want."

"Having at-home internet service has made it easy to access millions of needed information, books, movies, and much more without leaving home."

COVID-19 Pandemic

"Pandemic closed many businesses and since then it has taken a long time to get hours back to pre-pandemic times."

"When Covid restrictions arose, we stop[ped] visiting. Just haven't made our way back to visit."

Alternative Sources or Habits

"I buy books online."

"Access to information virtually/buy books online."

"I buy books due to working during library hours."

Other Factors

"I lost my library card."

"Not sure of locations and what each branch offers."



- Importance of the Library as a Community Space**

"It's a pretty popular tweet that the library is one of the last places where you can go without the expectation of spending money."
- Expansion of Programs and Services**

"I would like to see a little more interactive artificial intelligence study teachings and opportunities within the Milwaukee Public Library."

"I would like to see more investment in the creative arts and maker spaces such as at the Franklin Library."
- Accessible Spaces and Resources**

"I would love to see accessible coworking spaces... more personal spaces, more personal rooms, sensory rooms as well."
- Financial Literacy and Intellectual Property Support**

"More entrepreneurial financial literacy programs on how to protect their inventions and their intellectual property."

"To help the community become more financially literate... to provide for themselves and to himself."
- Other Considerations**

"I would like to see more of the funds being invested into operational costs such as extending hours programs such as not only youth engagement but also early learning."



- Educational Institutions and Programs**

"Milwaukee Public Schools, The Private/Charter School Districts, Foster Family Agencies, Family Friendly Employers, Employment Agencies"

"UWM college, universities and schools"
- Community Organizations and Services**

"But I think by finding your local CBOs or nonprofits, then that can help get the word out. You guys could collaborate and brainstorm to come up with more ideas that will better benefit both organizations. MPL that CBO as well as the community."
- Media and Communication Platforms**

"Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, online sites"

"TV/Radio, News teams, newspaper"
- Local Businesses and Retailers**

"Grocery stores, restaurants, Walmart, Target, etc."

"Local businesses, small black businesses"
- Other Considerations**

"Booth set[ups], farmers markets and other outdoor events partnering with museums like Betty Brin, Discovery World and the Art Museum."



Partnership and Collaboration

"Partnering with social work agencies and refugee resettlement agencies would be incredibly beneficial to the people who make use of those social work services."

Utilizing social media and Online Platforms

"A big age group that libraries struggle to reach are often teens. And I think MPL has done a phenomenal job with their TikTok page where several of the videos have gone viral and it's clear that the person running them, people running them, really know how to connect with that age group and how to put out information. And it is absolutely perfect..."

Outreach and Engagement in Various Settings

"Be present at festivals, farmers markets, and neighborhood events."

"Set up library mobiles in corporate locations...have a library day in the corporate offices."

Word of Mouth and Awareness

"Word of mouth is great...making more awareness of the programs it offers."

"Highlight additional services beyond books."

Non-Digital Outreach

"Utilize non-digital methods like flyers and resource tables."

"I think that advertisement on the radio. Also Bayshore Mall. TV for advertisement[s]. The Milwaukee County bus system and also the DMV for advertisement."

WHAT NEW PROGRAMS INDIVIDUALS WOULD LIKE TO SEE



- Teen Education and Afterschool Activities**

"Special programming for students because there's really not anything for them to do outside of school hours or during the summer months."
- Access to Benefits and Services**

"Access to benefits, government benefits, public benefits, access to legal services, access to health care, housing, access to jobs...would help uplift the indigent and housing insecure."

"Having those free programs or people knowing where to go for those services would be very good."
- Children's Programs and Resources**

"Investment in children's materials and spaces for children to get homework help after school...would be a great place to invest."

"More investment into the STEM program[s] as well as a few more branches...that allows children to have resources that they need."
- Community Engagement and Outreach**

"Being a place where people can meet and get extra help for those resources...to continue to be a place where people can meet and get extra help."
- Expanded Services and Resources**

"Hosting live shows, live music...and also a place where they can show you how to do your taxes."

"Access to co-working spaces...and having little desk areas...and possibly mailboxes."

CONVERSATIONS & ENGAGEMENT THEMES

The Milwaukee Public Library held 14 in-person Community Conversations to understand patrons' current level of engagement with the Library, preferences for operating hours, and knowledge of current services offered. Additionally, INPOWER conducted multiple community conversations with community outreach workers, senior citizens & faith-based members, LGBTQIA+ allies and members, AAPI (notably Hmong & Chinese) individuals, Muslims, and immigrant communities like Hispanic and Burmese. The goal was to understand the community's relationship to the Library and identify themes to strengthen community engagement. The following highlights our learnings from those combined sessions.

BRANCH LISTENING SESSIONS THEMES



Continue Partnership & Collaboration

Maintain and build relationships with schools, businesses, etc. to boost community engagement.



Consider Longer Operating Hours

Preferences for longer weekend availability, late evenings and mid-week hours.



Keep Prioritizing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Emphasizing inclusive spaces for staff, guests and patrons will continue to encourage library visits and interactions.



Encourage Active Community Feedback

Actions like encouraging ongoing feedback from community members will allow for optimized community engagement.



Leverage Advocacy Opportunities

Activate lobbyists to secure funding and advocate for libraries.



Actively promote all programs and services

From resources accessible online to in-person services and programs, the community would like to see more active promotion of the library's abundant offerings.

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS THEMES



Increase Paid, Targeted Marketing & Promotion

Leveraging tools like social media, paid advertisements, flyers & collateral and media outlets can increase reach.



Highlight Diverse Content

Actively promoting multicultural and multilingual content may help engage some non-patrons.



Continue Adult & Youth Centric Programming

The library is celebrated for offering adult targeted educational support and child-centered programming.



Meet Community Members Where They Are

People love when the library partners with local organizations to offer services directly to them and addresses transportation barriers.



Create More Ethnic Celebrations

Community members would love to see the library cultural preservation & heritage celebrations more.



Create Public Opportunities To Celebrate Staff

Respondents often referenced staff members when recalling positive interactions with the library and expressed an interest in ensuring staff members are constantly celebrated.

APPENDIX & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Additional supportive documents and other ways to look at the report are available on GetLoudMPL.com, which include:

- Audio clips
- Digital charts
- Audio summary experience



Get Loud For Libraries:
A Milwaukee Public Library Community Engagement Project

Acknowledgments

We express our profound gratitude to everyone who contributed to this report. Special thanks to the Milwaukee Public Library Administration, Staff and Board, the City of Milwaukee, and the individuals who shared their invaluable insights and experiences.

For More Information or Queries, Contact

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Disclaimer

The information provided in this report is based on data available up to 11/30/23. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, INPOWER and its affiliates are not responsible for any errors, omissions, or changes that might have occurred after this date.

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