

Haverford Township Free Library 2008 Survey Results

Introduction

The Haverford Township Free Library has embarked on an ambitious plan to grow its circulation and the number of visitors over the next few years. As part of our efforts to improve the library, we launched this survey to study how well we're doing on key services and identify areas for improvements. As in previous surveys, we learned a great deal from the responses and comments and will use them as we go about the daily operations of the library and as we continue to plan for growth.

Methodology

The Haverford Township Free Library conducted this non-random survey of its users from May to August 2008. The survey was available in both hard copy at the front desk and on-line via SurveyMonkey. The online link was distributed through emails sent out by the director of the library and on the Library homepage. In total, there were 266 individuals who submitted responses to the survey, and 220 fully completed surveys. In our summaries, we used the full number of completed responses to a given question. The hard copy surveys were entered into SurveyMonkey.com to aid compilation and analysis. As this was not a random survey, the results are not scientifically representative of the entire community of library users, but do shed light on areas of strengths and weaknesses of our library which will be helpful for making improvements.

FINDINGS

About Survey Respondents and Usage

The majority of respondents were frequent users of the library, with 6.4 percent visiting daily, 37.1 percent visiting at least once or twice a week, and 34 percent visiting more than once a month. Approximately 19 percent of respondents visited several times a year, 2 percent visited approximately once a year and 1.6 percent of respondents reported never visiting the library.

Not surprisingly, the main reason for visiting the library was to check out books, selected by 90 percent of survey respondents. Other reasons for visiting the Haverford Township Free Library, were the good selection of books (selected by 50 percent) and selection of multi media (30 percent), the friendly (37 percent) and well informed staff (31 percent) and to attend programs (30 percent).

In addition, we found that a large percentage of survey respondents, more than half, visit the library's Web Site, several times a week to once a month. Sixty-four percent indicated they were able to find what they were looking for most of the time. The majority of people use the library's website to remotely access their accounts. This use is followed by to obtain library information, to use as a research and reference tool, and to get to community and other resource links. Approximately 86 percent indicated that they found the site easy to navigate.

Evaluating Resources, Services, and Facility: How is the Library doing?

In general, users report that the library is providing satisfactory services and resources for nearly all categories listed. (See Table 1.) The library earned two outstanding ratings by the majority of responses, one in friendliness of staff and the other in the provision of online holds and renewals. In addition, the library was rated as above satisfactory in five categories: book selection, cleanliness, children's programs, children's space and library hours.

The only category of services or resources in which the library received an overall evaluation that was less than satisfactory was in parking which was rated as "poor" by 62 percent or 105 respondents. In 2007, the library served more than 287,000 visitors with 17 parking spaces. Sixty-four percent of respondents to survey said that lack of parking has affected their use of the library. One respondent said, "If I can't find a parking space, I will leave and go to another library (I don't live far from Ludington) This has happened many times, and it is very frustrating, esp. if you just want to drop off or return a book." Another noted that street parking is restricted during school hours, making that less of a viable option for some. Several respondents noted that they were less likely to go to the library because of the lack of adequate parking.

Although the library director and board are overall pleased with the results of these assessments, it is helpful to see where we can be doing a better job. We hope to move many of the categories that were evaluated as satisfactory to above average or outstanding in the future.

Table 1. Assessments of the Library's services and resources

	<u>Poor</u>		<u>Satisfactory</u>		<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Average Rating</u>	<u>Count</u>
Books selection	2.8% (6)	5.1% (11)	26.0% (56)	47.0% (101)	19.1% (41)	3.74	215
Adult programs	0.5% (1)	4.6% (9)	54.6% (106)	27.3% (53)	12.9% (25)	3.47	194
Teen programs	2.5% (4)	11.4% (18)	55.7% (88)	23.4% (37)	7.0% (11)	3.21	158
Free access to subscription databases	2.4% (4)	11.5% (19)	49.1% (81)	23.0% (38)	13.9% (23)	3.35	165
Free access to downloadable books	2.5% (4)	13.7% (22)	55.3% (89)	18.6% (30)	9.9% (16)	3.2	161
DVD selection	2.1% (4)	10.1% (19)	49.2% (93)	29.6% (56)	9.0% (17)	3.33	189
Music CD selection	4.6% (8)	13.9% (24)	54.9% (95)	21.4% (37)	5.2% (9)	3.09	173
Audiobooks selection	2.2% (4)	7.2% (13)	56.1% (101)	26.7% (48)	7.8% (14)	3.31	180
Comfortable seating	1.4% (3)	12.5% (27)	44.4% (96)	30.1% (65)	11.6% (25)	3.38	216
Study tables and seating	1.6% (3)	14.1% (27)	53.1% (102)	22.4% (43)	8.9% (17)	3.23	192
Workspace	3.6% (6)	13.3% (22)	57.0% (94)	18.2% (30)	7.9% (13)	3.13	165
Accessible bathrooms	2.3% (5)	8.1% (18)	55.2% (122)	24.4% (54)	10.0% (22)	3.32	221
Elevator	9.0% (16)	11.9% (21)	48.0% (85)	19.2% (34)	11.9% (21)	3.13	177
Parking	62.2% (135)	15.7% (34)	11.5% (25)	6.0% (13)	4.6% (10)	1.75	217
Community space for meetings	2.1% (4)	6.3% (12)	52.4% (100)	29.8% (57)	9.4% (18)	3.38	191
Cleanliness	1.4% (3)	6.0% (13)	25.8% (56)	47.9% (104)	18.9% (41)	3.77	217
Friendliness of staff	1.8% (4)	2.3% (5)	15.2% (33)	34.1% (74)	46.5% (101)	4.21	217
Children programs	1.1% (2)	3.2% (6)	35.1% (65)	41.6% (77)	18.9% (35)	3.74	185
Wireless	3.6% (6)	5.5% (9)	46.1% (76)	26.1% (43)	18.8% (31)	3.51	165
Computers	1.5% (3)	7.5% (15)	48.2% (96)	31.7% (63)	11.1% (22)	3.43	199
Food/Drink in the library	11.6% (20)	13.4% (23)	53.5% (92)	9.9% (17)	11.6% (20)	2.97	172
Tutoring space	3.7% (6)	21.6% (35)	52.5% (85)	16.0% (26)	6.2% (10)	2.99	162
Children's space	1.6% (3)	2.6% (5)	33.7% (64)	35.8% (68)	26.3% (50)	3.83	190
Teen's space	5.4% (9)	16.8% (28)	54.5% (91)	17.4% (29)	6.0% (10)	3.02	167
Interactive website	6.1% (11)	4.4% (8)	38.3% (69)	31.7% (57)	19.4% (35)	3.54	180
Lighting	3.4% (7)	9.9% (20)	42.4% (86)	32.5% (66)	11.8% (24)	3.39	203
Library hours	3.8% (8)	7.5% (16)	30.5% (65)	36.2% (77)	22.1% (47)	3.65	213
Place holds or renew on-line	3.0% (6)	7.6% (15)	25.9% (51)	19.8% (39)	43.7% (86)	3.93	197

Note: Numbers listed are Percent (# of Respondents)

Improving the Haverford Township Free Library

As the library considers how best to address current and future needs, respondents were queried about what facilities, resources and services were most important to them as individual users. The categories that received the largest number of responses as being important were:

- Book selection (84 percent or 199 responses)
- Parking (70 percent or 168)
- Cleanliness (70 percent or 166)
- Library hours (61 percent or 145)
- Children’s programs (54 percent or 124 responses) and Children’s space (53 percent)
- Comfortable seating (52 percent or 125)
- Accessible bathrooms (44 percent or 105)

See Table 2 for a complete list of responses regarding how important these categories of library resources, services or facilities should be in planning for the future of the library.

Table 2. Importance ratings of services, resources and facility as library plans for improvements

	Not important		Important to me			Average Rating	Total Responses
Books selection	0.8% (2)	0.8% (2)	2.5% (6)	11.8% (28)	84.0% (199)	4.77	237
Adult programs	6.4% (15)	8.9% (21)	30.2% (71)	26.0% (61)	28.5% (67)	3.61	235
Teen programs	10.6% (24)	8.0% (18)	21.2% (48)	31.0% (70)	29.2% (66)	3.6	226
Free access to subscription databases	16.2% (37)	11.4% (26)	23.2% (53)	22.8% (52)	26.3% (60)	3.32	228
Free access to downloadable books	16.1% (37)	13.0% (30)	30.4% (70)	20.4% (47)	20.0% (46)	3.15	230
DVD selection	9.9% (23)	10.7% (25)	24.9% (58)	28.8% (67)	25.8% (60)	3.5	233
Music CD selection	16.9% (39)	15.2% (35)	32.0% (74)	20.3% (47)	15.6% (36)	3.03	231
Audiobooks selection	15.5% (36)	12.9% (30)	27.2% (63)	18.1% (42)	26.3% (61)	3.27	232
Comfortable seating	0.4% (1)	2.5% (6)	15.1% (36)	29.7% (71)	52.3% (125)	4.31	239
Study tables and seating	5.2% (12)	4.3% (10)	26.0% (60)	27.7% (64)	36.8% (85)	3.87	231
Workspace	8.9% (20)	12.0% (27)	25.3% (57)	23.1% (52)	30.7% (69)	3.55	225
Accessible bathrooms	3.3% (8)	3.3% (8)	21.6% (52)	28.2% (68)	43.6% (105)	4.05	241
Elevator	15.2% (35)	13.5% (31)	25.7% (59)	17.4% (40)	28.3% (65)	3.3	230
Parking	5.0% (12)	4.6% (11)	6.3% (15)	14.2% (34)	70.0% (168)	4.4	240
Community space for meetings	5.5% (13)	8.1% (19)	31.5% (74)	25.5% (60)	29.4% (69)	3.65	235
Cleanliness	0.8% (2)	0.8% (2)	5.9% (14)	23.0% (55)	69.5% (166)	4.59	239
Friendliness of staff	0.8% (2)	1.2% (3)	6.2% (15)	28.1% (68)	63.6% (154)	4.52	242
Children programs	9.5% (22)	3.9% (9)	16.9% (39)	16.0% (37)	53.7% (124)	4	231
Wireless	10.4% (24)	10.4% (24)	23.5% (54)	21.7% (50)	33.9% (78)	3.58	230
Computers	7.4% (17)	7.4% (17)	24.3% (56)	23.5% (54)	37.4% (86)	3.76	230
Food/Drink in the library	40.3% (94)	14.6% (34)	23.6% (55)	9.4% (22)	12.0% (28)	2.38	233
Tutoring space	14.9% (34)	12.7% (29)	20.2% (46)	28.9% (66)	23.2% (53)	3.33	228
Children's space	7.8% (18)	3.5% (8)	15.2% (35)	20.4% (47)	53.0% (122)	4.07	230
Teen's space	10.6% (24)	11.9% (27)	20.7% (47)	24.7% (56)	32.2% (73)	3.56	227
Interactive website	5.3% (12)	8.8% (20)	22.9% (52)	25.1% (57)	37.9% (86)	3.81	227
Lighting	1.3% (3)	2.6% (6)	18.4% (43)	29.9% (70)	47.9% (112)	4.21	234
Library hours	0.8% (2)	1.3% (3)	9.2% (22)	27.7% (66)	60.9% (145)	4.47	238
Place holds or renew on-line	3.8% (9)	3.4% (8)	9.4% (22)	17.1% (40)	66.2% (155)	4.38	234

Planning for the future of the Haverford Township Free Library

The Haverford Township Free Library is a vital and vibrant part of the community and, if we plan and prepare well now, will continue to be a resource well into the 21st century. Indeed, as noted earlier, the number of visitors increased to 287,000 in 2007.

Survey respondents (who tended to be higher users of the library in the first place) saw several ways that the library will serve the public in the 21st century. In an information society, respondents see the library as a place that:

- provides information (88 percent),
- supports children's education (84 percent),
- supports learning (81 percent),
- is a technology resource (70 percent), and
- is a gathering and meeting space in the community (68 percent).

In the community, there has been much internal and external discussion about the need for a new library building. Seventy-four percent of the survey respondents were in favor of building a new library.

Parting Thoughts from the Director

In an effort to evaluate the community's perception of the library's performance, value, and adherence to fulfilling the library's mission (now and in the future), we conduct yearly surveys. Our 2008 survey was the first that was made available online. It proved to be a very popular way for the community to communicate their thoughts and feelings with us. I want to thank all who took the time both to let us know what you think of us now and what you want in the future.

I was very proud to see that we rated top scores on customer service. HTFL's staff is committed to making sure that your time in the library is beneficial and pleasant. In the words of one customer:

"I think this is a superb library, the staff is very friendly and helpful. I see the library as a very valuable community resource."

Although customer service includes the friendliness of the staff, it is not limited to it. Our customer service encompasses our ability to personalize each interaction to meet individual needs and to provide the resources, programs, and services that you seek when either in the library or accessing the library remotely. We will never become complacent when it comes to providing you the highest caliber of service.

The 2008 survey asked for more than your feedback on our collections, programs, and amenities – like parking which, once again, you told us is abysmal

"If I can't find a parking space, I will leave and go to another library..... This has happened many times, and it is very frustrating....."

We also asked for your thoughts on our website and plans for a new library. Since the survey closed, we have launched a new website, and many of your comments were incorporated into our redesign, including clearer links, ability to email questions to staff, consistency in the look, and easier navigation. Some of the suggestions are out of our hands, like making changes to the online catalog and using a pin number instead of your 14 digit barcode to access your account, but these will be passed along to the appropriate source. Our website will never be static. We will continue to follow through on suggestions and provide you with more and more resources.

The majority of those who took the survey recognize and support the need to improve the library building. As one person stated:

"Strongly in favor of plans to build a new library. The library serves the community across all ages. Financially, it is the best entertainment and education opportunity in the township. EVERYONE can benefit from it, despite age, financial situation, physical limitations (except for the current parking problem), or educational level. No other recreational or educational service in the township reaches as many residents as the library does."

I could not agree more with this respondent's sentiment about the significance of the library. That being said, we acknowledge that while the majority of respondents support a new library, others do not want the library to move from its current location as it is close to their homes and the middle and high schools and some are concerned that a new building will increase taxes. These are valid concerns and warrant honest and open discussion.

What more did we learn from this survey? We know you feel good about the staff, that you like most of the collections but want more, that you feel we offer good programs but again want more of them and more information about them. You would like dedicated tutoring space, better programming space, more

parking, a more comfortable environment, and easier access to returning material.

The library administration, board, and staff will use the results of this survey to enhance our resources and programs, strengthen our services, improve our facility, and develop clearer and more efficient modes of communication. I certainly want all of you to feel the same way about HTFL as this respondent:

“I am happy to have the Haverford Township Free Library in my life.....”

Is your voice important to us? Absolutely!