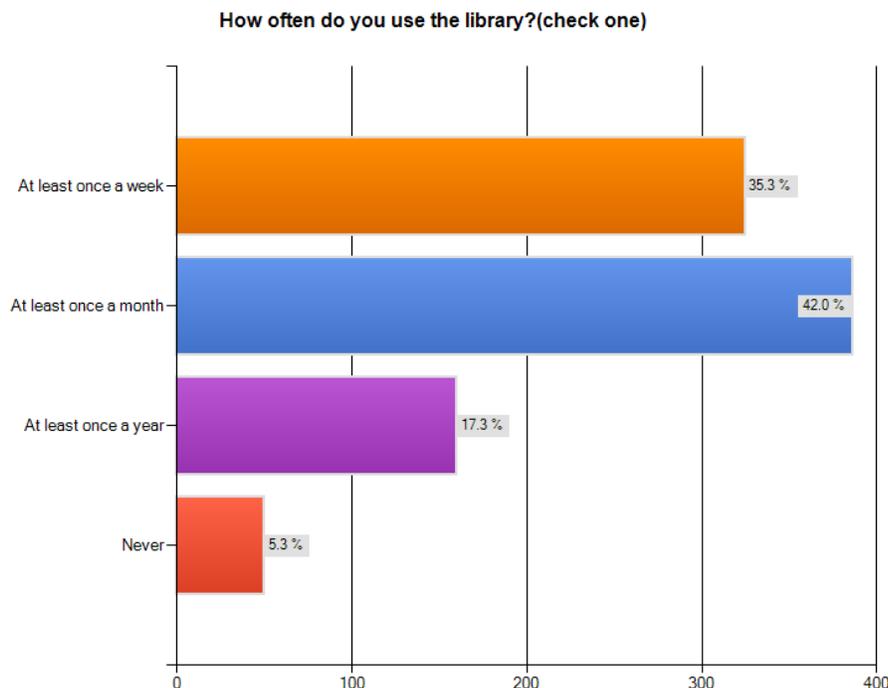


Forbes Library Community Survey Results

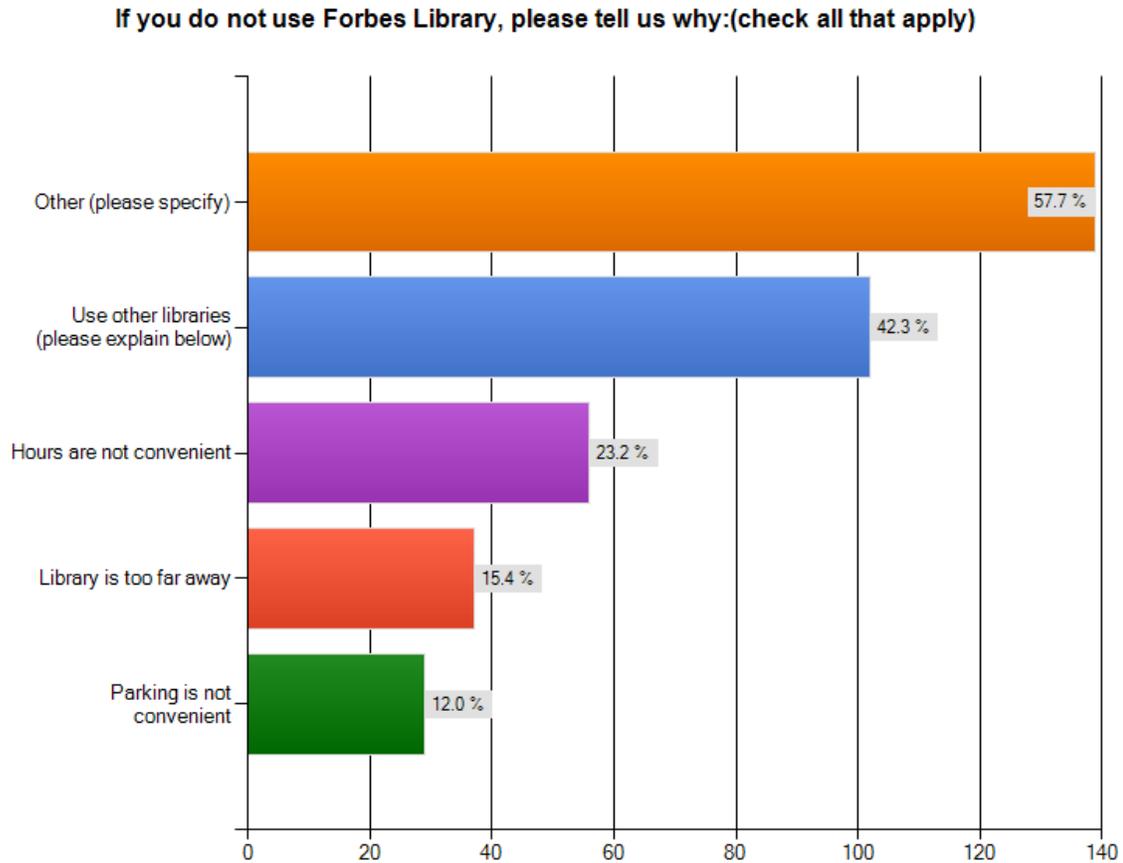
The library conducted a survey from March 5 – April 10, 2011 and received 881 completed surveys. This response rate is excellent and exceeds a level necessary to gain statistical significance. The results of this survey were part of the library’s strategic planning process. Below is a summary of the survey results. The Strategic Planning committee will use these results along with additional feedback from the community as its guide in setting the library’s goals over the next few years. The plan will be released in early fall 2011.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who participated. The library entered the names of all interested people who completed the survey online in a drawing for a Nook e-book reader. Congratulations to Jing from Northampton who was our lucky winner.

Question 1: How often do you use the library?



Question 2: If you do not use Forbes Library, please tell us why



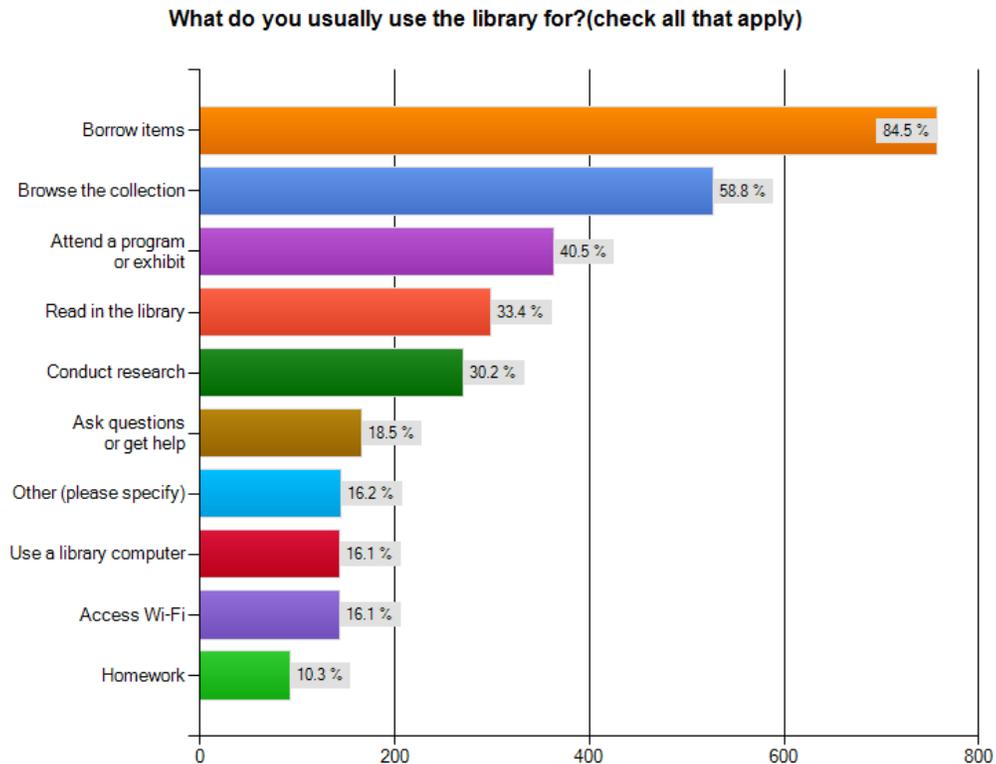
This question was answered by 27% (241) of respondents. Of the fourteen options that were given in the question the four that were chosen by over 10% of the respondents to this question were “Use other libraries” (42%), “Hours are not convenient” (23%), “Library is too far away” (15%) and “Parking is not convenient” (12%). Respondents were asked to specify why they use other libraries and over 60% gave a reason that was not specifically related to Forbes Library. Most of these people lived in other communities and used their hometown library or were simply not library users (bought books instead of borrowing, non-readers). Of the remaining 54 responses, 44% were about hours and parking issues. The remaining seventeen responses were primarily specific concerns or negative experiences with Forbes Library’s services or staff.

Question 3: At which times would you be most likely to use the library? (check all that apply)

	Morning (9am-12pm)	Afternoon (12pm-5pm)	Evening (5pm-9pm)	Total
Monday	30.9% (200)	49.8% (322)	54.7% (354)	647
Tuesday	25.7% (151)	58.9% (346)	48.4% (284)	587
Wednesday	31.1% (204)	53.2% (349)	54.4% (357)	656
Thursday	25.9% (158)	57.4% (351)	50.7% (310)	611
Friday	33.2% (194)	61.8% (361)	40.2% (235)	584
Saturday	54.1% (357)	80.3% (530)	17.9% (118)	660
Sunday	36.2% (195)	87.9% (473)	19.7% (106)	538

This is one of several survey questions that reveals the community’s request for additional library hours. Many respondents selected times that the library is not currently open. Favorite times for the library to be open are spread fairly evenly over the course of the week with afternoons and evenings being more popular overall and weekend afternoons being the most popular. The single most popular time for the library to be open is Sunday afternoon which was selected by 87.9% of respondents.

Question 4: What do you usually use the library for?



Many of the comments under “other” reinforced the “checked” answers (84% used the library to borrow books and 17% to pick up an inter-library loan item.) The majority of “other” uses were to visit the children’s room or attend a children’s event (18%). Many came to write (14%), either independently or as part of a program and the quiet atmosphere was appreciated by them and others.

Other uses that respondents mentioned were to view the art and attend meetings. The relatively low number of respondents who indicated they came to the library to “use a library computer” seems to be contradicted by the number of people using library computers on any given day.

Quotes:

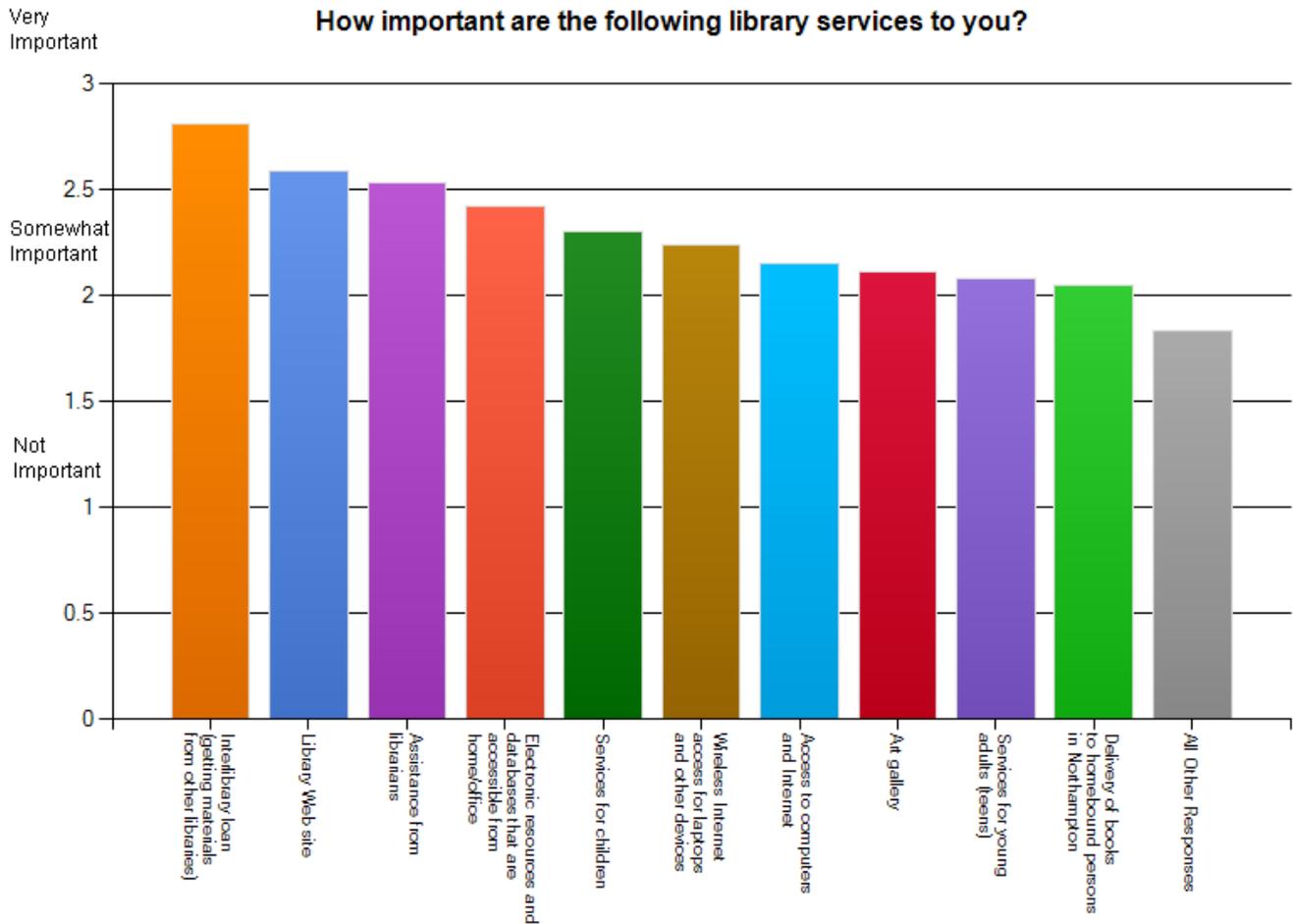
“The day just isn’t complete without stopping by the library after running errands.”

“It is a lovely space, and I find just visiting it and being around books brightens my day!”

“I go to the library as a place to work, read, or use the internet all of which I can do elsewhere, but I like a change of scene, especially in the Winter and Forbes has a nice atmosphere and is warm in the Winter.”

“I just like Forbes is why.”

Question 5: How important are the following library services to you?



Many people responded that they were indicating what services they personally used, but were equally concerned with services they perceive as needed by others, e.g. adaptive services, services for seniors, for children. Most of the answers to “other” were in response to the “Programs (please list topics of interest below)” in the check off section. The most popular were various presentations and readings and children’s programs.

Readings, especially by local authors, were cited the most (21 %) with over half mentioning poetry readings. Lectures, especially those on history, particularly local history, and health were important to 15 % of respondents. Book groups and writing programs were also cited numerous times. Children’s programs were cited by 14 %. The responses cover such a wide range that it is clear all programs and services offered by the library are important. This reinforces what is evident from the number of people attending programs.

Quotes:

Many of the quotes reflect people’s concern for the community, e.g. “I think a library is a critically important community resource.”

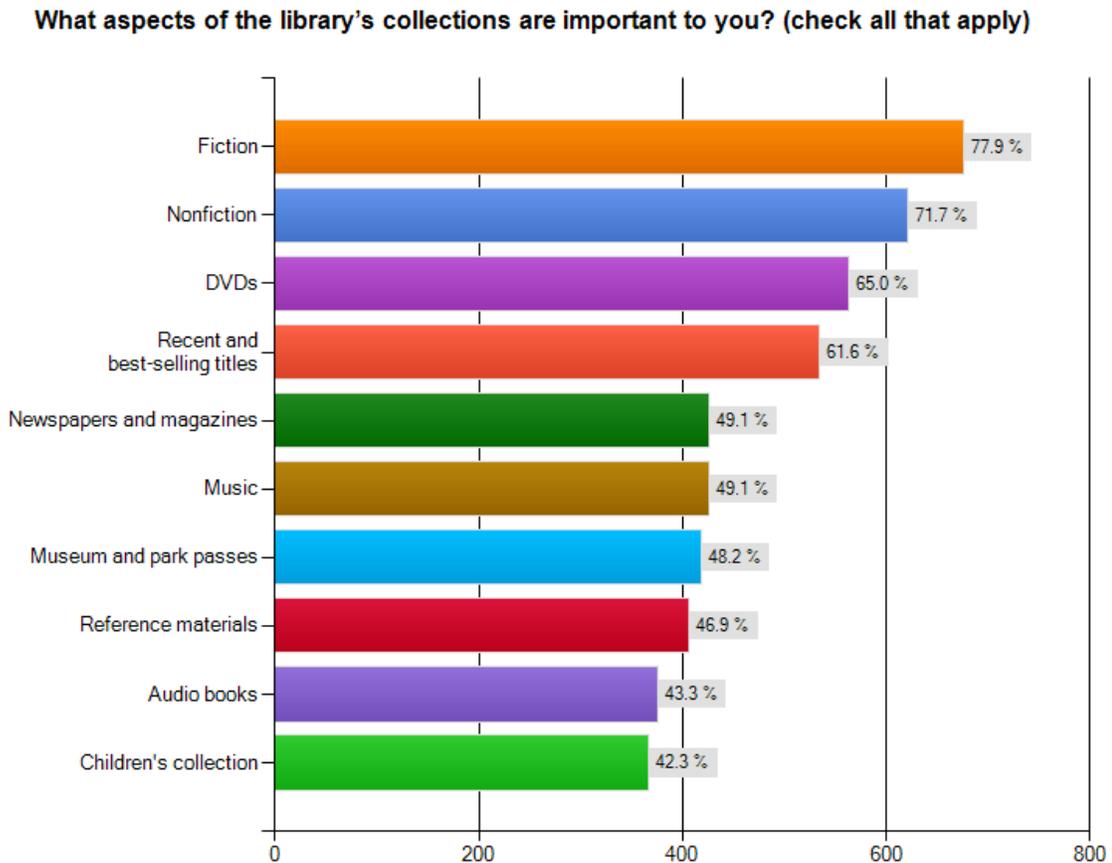
“I do not personally need adaptive services or book delivery, but it is very important to me that these be available for those who do need them.”

“I have other ways of getting what I need. What's important to me is good service, people who aren't snarky and generally a pleasant feeling in a location.”

“I enjoy the gallery and peace on a regular basis. Service people always have answers for me for when I get stuck on something I am looking for.”

“(Forbes) it is the village green”

Question 6: What aspects of the library’s collections are important to you?



Nearly everyone (868 people) answered this question. Most of the 63 people who wrote something in “other” chose to comment on their vote or to narrow it to specific subject areas. Some of the most frequent comments were for materials on art, the children’s collection, fiction, and non-print media. It should be noted that there was some confusion on this question as to whether it applied to just those categories the respondent used personally, or to all categories the respondent felt the library should emphasize. Although a few people commented on the confusion, we don’t really know how everyone interpreted it.

ART: “art research,” “I particularly read the art and craft magazine on the 2nd floor,” “the collection of art books,” “contemporary art,” “info on art galleries,” “art research.”

CHILDREN: “I had no idea how many children’s books the library has that are either out of print or hard to find. It is a wonderful resource for much better books than most of what’s sold. . .,” “materials from the library help my kids stay reading, which would be difficult to afford otherwise,” “children’s collection for my grandchildren, who love it,” “all young adult books.”

FICTION: “would like the collection to focus more on literary fiction and less on popular mystery and romantic fiction,” “reference books on literature,” “fiction (both recent and older titles) is most important to me,” “Forbes is a great library with a not so great contemporary fiction collection. Jones has much better fiction,” “all fiction.”

NONPRINT: “downloadable audio books and e-books, e-book readers,” “I don’t know how to use most of the latest devices,” “VHS videos,” “books on tape (audio books?),” “Forbes has a great music collection that can only get bigger!!!” “movies,” “beginning to explore more e-books, love the Tumblebooks feature on the website,” “audio books is triple-starred.”

Question 7: Are there types of materials that you would like to see the library have or have more of?

Over 2/3 of responders skipped this question. Of the 246 who answered, three areas in particular seemed to stand out:

More of all non-print media, esp. CDs, DVDs, and audio books

More current titles in fiction as well as non-fiction

More materials for English learners as well as foreign language materials in general

NONPRINT: “Current DVDs.” “More recent books on CD and tape, more recent DVDs and VHS tapes.” “The new types of audiobooks – the ones that are sized like larger mp3 players.” “More great fiction in the audio collection. Most of what you have is mysteries or crime. I would like to see more classics.” “More recent DVD movies.” “Some newer CDs, classic R&R, Motown.”

There were a few requests for Mac-compatible audio books and e-books and for more information about technology in the library generally, e.g., “I would like for info about electronic resources to be more accessible. I don't really know what electronic databases are available, for example, or how to get an e-book reader, or how to access downloadable audio books. I know they exist; I just have no idea how to get them (and I'm a very frequent user of the library!)”

MORE CURRENT TITLES: “Keep as current as possible on purchasing new materials.” “Contemporary poetry and non-fiction.” “More recent fiction, though I understand there are budgetary restrictions.” “Recent/Best-selling titles. ILL is pretty effective, but it can still take a long time for popular titles to come in.” “More recent teen books.”

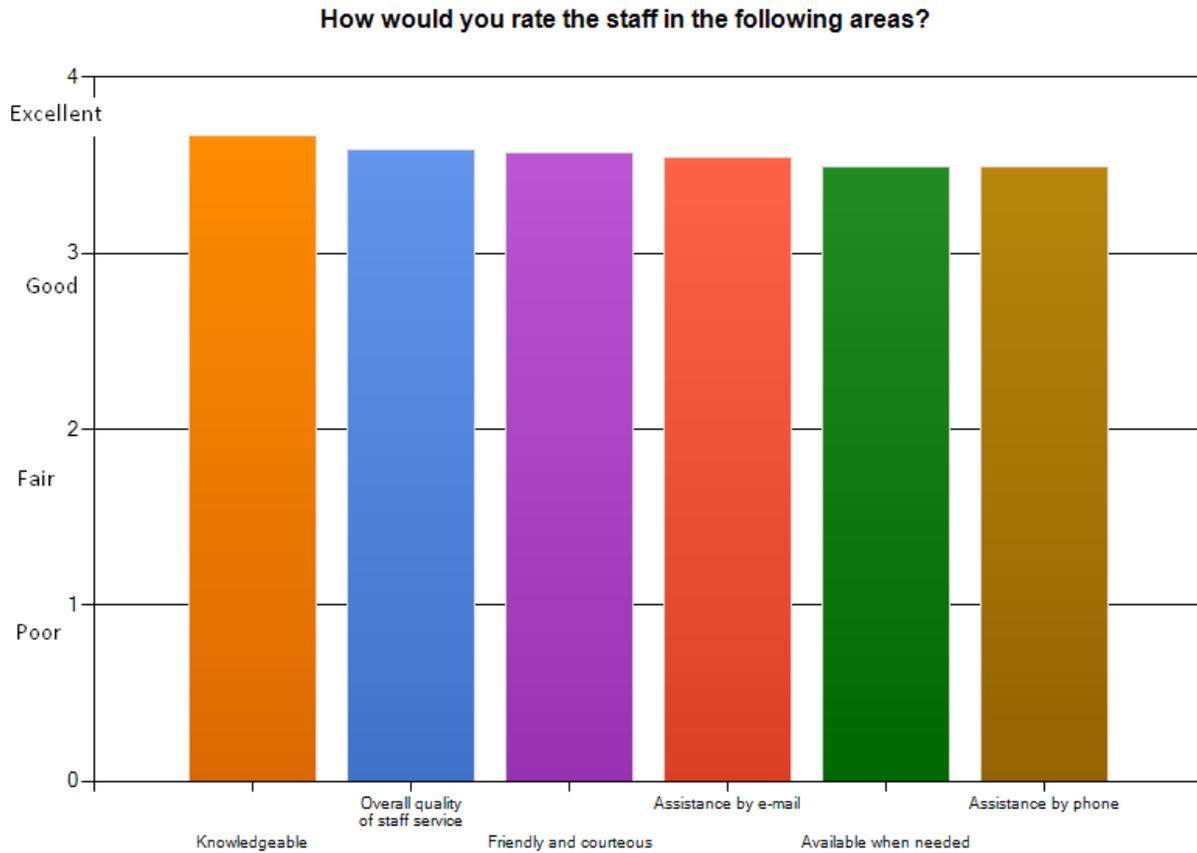
There were also several comments urging more serious, more literary titles, e.g., “Library is somewhat weak on literary fiction and nonfiction. Books receiving favorable reviews in NY Times Book Review or ‘New & Noteworthy’ in the New Yorker: these should be standard acquisitions in Northampton. “ “I would like to see more adult fiction titles represented – it’s a bit astonishing that you can go looking for a Nobel Prize winner like Naguib Mahfouz & not find it in the collection.” “Better, more serious fiction.”

ENGLISH LEARNERS/FOREIGN LANGUAGES : “Books in German,” “Rosetta Stone or Berlitz CDs,” “Foreign language books,” “Foreign newspapers and magazines,” “More books in Spanish for children,” “Resources for teachers/tutors of English learners,” “I want books in Turkish,” “I want books to learn English.”

Only 7.1% of responders checked “Materials for non-English speakers” in Question 6, but many people wished for more foreign language materials in general. There were comments on Question 6 calling for foreign language materials, as well here in Question 7.

There were also many comments expressing great satisfaction with the library’s collection. The library staff will review the comments in this question individually, because many of them offer very specific feedback and suggestions.

Question 8: How would you rate the staff in the following areas?



The survey asked for staff rating in the following categories: Knowledgeable, Friendly and Courteous, Availability, Assistance via phone or email and Overall quality of staff service. Ratings consisted of excellent, good, fair, poor and N/A. 864 people answered the question with 141 written comments.

The staff consistently ranked 88-93% in the excellent/good categories in all areas.

Knowledgeable: staff scored 93.2% excellent/good, and 2.1% fair/poor.

The majority of written comments were very positive. Most others had comments suggesting that individual staff members' knowledge varied.

1. "I have always found the staff to be friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. They are very willing to help when I am looking for a book or DVD that may be found in some hidden location and have it delivered to Forbes. I enjoy working with the staff."

2. "Some staff are very friendly and knowledgeable and are wonderful to interact with. A very few are less so."

Friendly and Courteous: staff scored 89.6 in the excellent/good ratings and 8.3% in fair/good.

Numerous written comments found the staff to be very courteous and friendly, nice, and approachable. There were also comments stating the staff was rude, angry, harsh, standoffish and not friendly. Some of these comments were qualified to suggest that the staff was overworked. Other comments suggested the respondent finds going to the library is like visiting a friend and that they feel there is a personal relationship with staff members. Comments such as "smiles are welcome" and "name tags would be nice." Lastly, a number of comments suggested that there was a large improvement in the staff's encounters with the public in the past few years.

1. "Consistently courteous and are very helpful."
2. "Staff needs assistance in treating public in a friendly manner." "Sometimes the staff just seems angry. I think they are overworked."
3. "Staff friendliness has improved significantly over the past 5 years."

Assistance via phone/email: this category had the least responses but still had an average rating of 3.49 and 3.54 out of four, consistent with positive ratings in the other categories.

Availability of staff: staff scored 88% in the excellent/good, 8.5% in fair/poor. Most comments referred to the staff needing more help as the reason behind the lack of availability.

1. "Sometimes there are more patrons than can be served by too few staff."

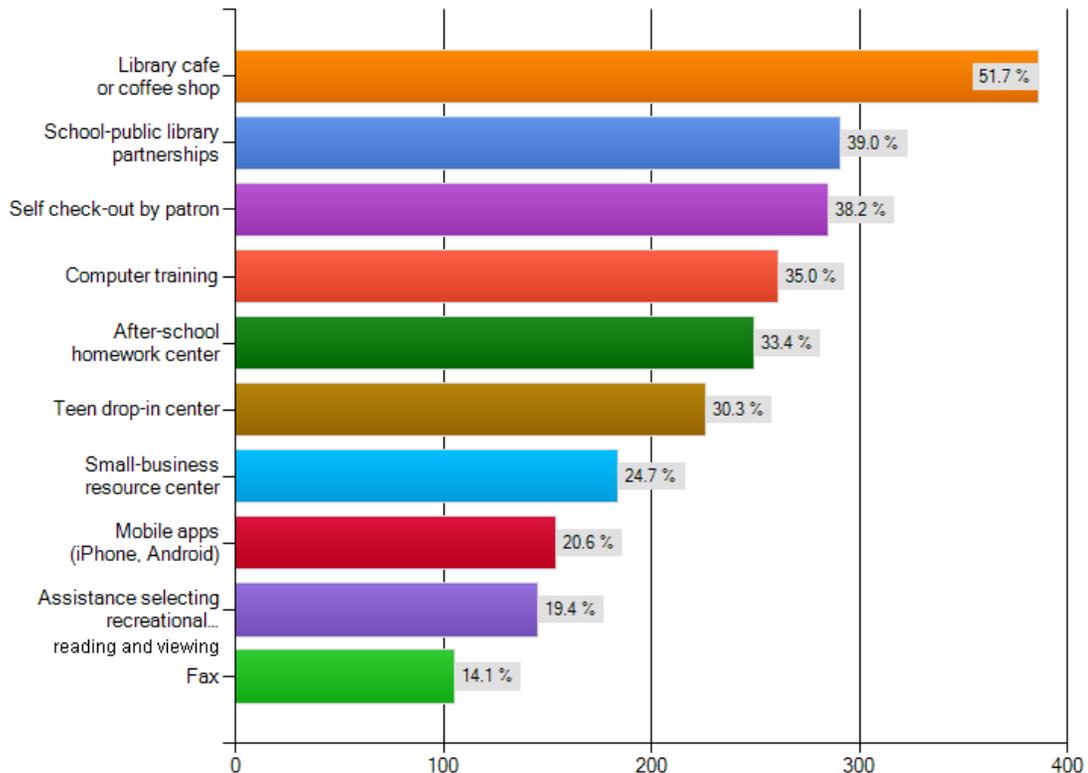
Overall Quality: staff scored 92% in excellent/good, 5.6% in fair/poor.

Positive comments far outweighed negative ones.

1. "The Forbes library staff is excellent all around! I have never had a question someone couldn't answer or a problem that wasn't solved with a minimum amount of trouble and no judgment (including fines and lost cards). And I've always been able to find someone when I needed them...and am always given the impression that there is nothing more important than helping me as long as it takes. Thank you so much!"
2. "Although library staff may not have known the answer to a problem or question, they have always persisted and asked fellow staff to help until my situation was resolved and needs were met."

Question 9: Which of these services would you like to see the library develop?

Which of these services would you like to see the library develop? (check all that apply)



Respondents used the “other” section to comment on check off choices. The café remains the most desired (with a few negatives over concern for food/drink on library materials and noise level). Computer help is important, as are services and programs for teenagers. Although self-checkout was mentioned, it was often more negative than positive. Many people felt the library needed no new services or felt we should make sure we keep/improve what we have before adding anything new.

A café remains the most requested service to be developed. The 12% who wanted a café confirms the 52% who checked café in the check off section. Computer training is the next service requested (10%). Self check-out was mentioned by 10%, but responses varied and were often either conditional, e.g. only if lines are long, after hours (?), if staff want it, or as long as staff don't lose jobs, or totally opposed. Other developments asked for by more than one respondent are services/programs for teens, more school/library partnerships and job skills workshops. There were a few requests for the library to be quieter.

Quotes:

“I would like to first ensure that current services and functions are sustained. Then additional programming might be considered.”

“I think you have everything I need in a library.”

“It would be awesome for there to just be a little coffee shop that has things like pastries, bagels, hot drinks so you can just sit and read and eat.”

“One thing I'd like to see un-develop is the amount of talking and disturbance that numerous library systems have shifted into...a kind of overliberal expressionist mode that often cuts into the silence I have always appreciated in libraries.”

On self check-out: From “Absolutely not a self check-out” to “Wow, self check out...never thought of that.”

Question 10: What do you like best about Forbes Library?

Most survey respondents took the chance to respond to this question (743 or 84% of total survey respondents). The “beautiful” and historic” building was the thing mentioned most often (421 or 57%) followed by compliments of our collection (354 or 48%), the library’s staff (212 or 29%) with special mention being made of the Children’s Room staff. Many people mentioned various services as being their favorite such as inter-library loan, the art gallery, access to computers, and online content.

The compliments for the building were effusive and covered the aesthetics, size, and atmosphere. The collection was given general compliments about size and selection and then many people mentioned specific favorite collections or media types with books, music, DVDs and magazines mentioned most frequently. Many kind words were said about the staff with “helpful,” “friendly,” “excellent” and “knowledgeable” most common. The Children’s Room is a favorite place for many in the library with many compliments given about the staff, space and collections. People like that the staff remember and greet many of the individual child patrons. Many people referred to specific services, with ILL and the art gallery being mentioned most often. Technology was cited in several ways with access to computers, the library’s website, the CWMARS catalog, wifi and databases all receiving multiple accolades. There were many comments about programming and this was often referred to in conjunction with a mention of the library as a “community center.”

Quotes:

“It’s a lovely historic building which embraces me and my family every time we walk in. We are proud to have it be part of our community and we love the services it provides.”

“The building, the feeling that it is central to my community.”

“The quality of the materials you collect. I like the intellectual content in both the print and media collections.”

“The space is amazing, not just architecturally but because the librarians and staff are so courteous and helpful! They make the space!”

“The building itself is a phenomenal treat to walk into; it’s an oasis of calm and quiet lovely.”

“The building itself, the beautiful interiors, the helpful staff, its transition in the past few years from a traditional library to a community center.”

“When I walk around the library on Saturdays, and see the number of people of all ages and walks of life and observe the extent of the activities they are engaged in, I feel that Forbes reflects the best of Northampton as a community. “

11. What do you like least about Forbes Library?

When asked specifically what they liked least about Forbes Library, most responders mentioned things that made using the library harder, such as too few open hours, parking issues, and difficulty with library doors. They also talked about things that bothered them in the library – that it was too noisy, or too poorly lit, or too warm. There were complaints about not finding what they wanted on the shelves, but most qualified that by praising inter-library loan.

There were 633 responses to the question, “What do you like least about Forbes Library?” 66 of those responses addressed the library not being open enough hours to satisfy the patrons. The next largest complaint was about the library’s collection with 58 responders finding a variety of aspects of the collection lacking. Other than audio books and DVDs with 8 requests each for more, no part of the collection got more than one or two mentions. The third most mentioned complaint (25) was that users find the Cutter System confusing. Other things mentioned as being liked least were parking meters, noise levels, lack of light, heavy front doors, lack of a rear entrance, and the wifi not consistent enough.

12. What would you like to tell us that we have not already asked?

Responses to question 12 focused on areas where people felt the library could serve the community better and how important the library was. There were very few criticisms. Lastly, many people thanked the library for asking their opinions and what they thought was a good survey.

Ideas for increased community support included:

1. More involvement with the Northampton school system.
2. Placing a bulletin board in the lobby with community events.
3. Increasing hours, especially in the summer.
4. More materials for young adults and afterschool "homework clubs."
5. Utilize the local newspaper to publicize library events and programs every week/month.
6. Utilize more volunteers.

Other suggestions included increasing technology options at the library such as PCclasses, increasing books such as more current arts/crafts, graphic novels, foreign language and audio books.

Positive comments involved all aspects of the library including the new renovation, being able to find and reserve books online, the lobby book sale, musical events and the outside book drop.

Constructive criticism dealt with parking issues such as the parking lot being too far from the front door, requesting a back entrance and having more 10 minute drop off parking spaces on the side of the building. One person stated the front door was much too heavy, especially for the elderly. A few people have found the Cutter system to be difficult and 2 people felt the space housing the Calvin Coolidge Museum could be better utilized.

1. "...spectacular community resource."
2. "...greatest treasure."
3. "...anchor of stability."
4. "...essential part of life..."

Question 13. How old are you?

97% (856) people responded to this question.

AGE GROUP % OF TOTAL RESPONSES

0-11	1%
12-18	2%
19-24	4%
25-40	21%
41-60	48%
61-79	22%
80+	2%

COMMENT: no elaboration on this one? I thought we were short on responses from young people.

Question 14. Please tell us the zip code where you live.

97% (857) people responded to this question. Of these, 65% live in Northampton (including Florence and Leeds). Most of the surrounding towns were represented in the remaining 35% of people who completed our survey with Easthampton, Amherst and Hadley being the most common.

Question 15. Please tell us the zip code where you work.

89% (780) people responded to this question. Of these, 83% work in Northampton (including Florence and Leeds). Many of the surrounding towns were represented in the remaining 17% of people who completed our survey with Easthampton, Amherst, Holyoke, and Hadley being the most common.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Downing at (413) 587-1017 or ldowning@forbeslibrary.org