THE ROLE OF THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY IN MAINE

report to

THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE
TO STUDY LIBRARY SERVICES IN MAINE

Abridged Version

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Arthur D. Little, Inc.

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN MAINE:

Consumer Needs and Attitudes Towards

Public Libraries in Maine

Report to:

The Governor's Task Force

to Study Library Services in Maine

Abridged Version

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The Governor's Task Force to study Library Services in Maine
has authorized this reprinting of Chapters I - IV of ADL's
report, The Role of the Public Library in Maine: Consumer
Needs and Attitudes Towards Public Libraries in Maine. In-
text references to Chapter V and the appendices have been
retained as in the original. Copies of the complete report
are on file at the Maine State Library.

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INCLUDED IN THIS ABRIDGED REPORT:

I. BACKGROUND

Early in 1969 the Governor of Maine appointed a Task Force to Study Library Services in Maine. The Maine Library Association was one of the prime movers in the establishment of the Task Force, feeling that Maine libraries were not adequately serving the needs of Maine people; there was no comprehensive plan for improvement; no plans dealt with library coordination; and there was no spearhead to attract attention to the problem and lend support to the planned solutions. The Task Force itself is broadly representative of lay people, trustees and librarians (public, academic, school and special) across the state.

The Governor charged the Task Force to survey existing resources in libraries in Maine, determine what they ought to be, and to recommend legislative enactments and any other action necessary to achieve their goals.

To determine what Maine's existing resources are, the Task Force contracted with Arco, Inc., to survey all types of libraries, though a detailed questionnaire sent to each library in Maine. These findings were compared to the national ALA standards, giving implications as to where libraries need the most attention. Arco also conducted over 5,000 interviews in six towns to determine the incidence and frequency of library use in the population at large, as well as in the family group.

Realizing a survey of resources alone was insufficient to judge where Maine libraries ought to be, the Task Force retained Arthur D. Little, Inc., to identify the attitudes of the general public toward libraries and how these attitudes affect library use.

Our approach was to conduct a series of four panel discussions, to conduct a survey of the general public, to present the data orally, and to hold a workshop session with the Task Force which would aid them in drawing action-oriented alternatives based on our findings. Section II, Methodology, deals with our scope of work in greater detail.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Panel Discussions

Before conducting our broad survey, we conducted four small group discussions, to learn the vocabulary of respondents regarding libraries; to test some questions; and to hypothesize variables affecting attitudes and use. See Appendix A at the end of this report for a write-up of that effort and a more detailed description of panel discussion methodology.

B. Surveys

To assist the Governor's Task Force to study library services in Maine, we have conducted and analyzed almost 1,900 interviews, with persons in twenty-six Maine communities. These respondents represent five separate groups, as follows:

1. 716 library card holders (referred to as "users") who were randomly selected from library registration files. (Interviewers talked to approximately 1,100 people to secure these interviews.)

2. 775 persons who do not presently hold a library card (referred to as "non-users") who were randomly selected from telephone directories with a targeted quota for the proportion of the following types of respondents: 50% female adults; 30% male adults; 10% female teenagers; 10% male teenagers. (Interviewers talked to approximately 2,100 people to secure these interviews.)

3. 232 library patrons (controlled circulation of questionnaires in four large libraries): Augusta, Portland, Bangor and Maine State. (280 questionnaires were sent to libraries.)

4. 76 respondents in bookmobile towns, roughly half of which were randomly selected from registration lists and half of which were randomly selected from the telephone directory. (Approximately 100 people were contacted to secure the interviews.)

5. 94 mailed questionnaires, to people known not to have phones, people using the state library frequently by mail, and people on the user list whom we were unable to contact by phone. An additional 20 came in too late to be included in our analysis. (Approximately 300 questionnaires were mailed out and about 60 were returned marked "addressee not at this address".)

The twenty-six communities surveyed represent four different categories: seven in communities having over 10,000 population; seven in communities having 2,500 to 10,000 population; seven in communities having under 2,500 population; and five in communities served by bookmobile. The communities are:

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Over 10,000	2,500-10,000	Under 2,500	Bookmobile
Augusta	Bridgton	Blue Hill	Canton
Bangor	Eastport	Bowdoinham	Danforth
Biddeford	Fort Kent	Fayette	Dixmont
Caribou	Millinocket	Greenville	Etna
Portland	Orono	Islesboro	Seboeis
Presque Isle	Thomaston	Parkman	
Sanford	York	Poland	

Each of the large communities was to have approximately 50 interviews of users and 50 non-users interviews. Medium-size communities were given a quota of 35 user and 35 non-user interviews; and small towns, 25 user and 25 non-user interviews. Bookmobile towns were to have approximately 10 user and 10 non-user interviews. Those questionnaires received back in the mail counted as part of the quota (even though they are separated in the analysis).

Interviewers were college students and recent college graduates who were con-tracted by the hour by Arthur D. Little, Inc. We retained the same core of seven interviewers, whom we trained, throughout the study. Interviewing was conducted weekday evenings and weekends, except for cases where the respond-ent could only be reached or preferred to be reached, during the day. Inter-views were validated by an Arthur D. Little, Inc. staff member within a week after the initial interview. Interviewers kept a tally sheet for each commun-ity, indicating on the sheet each contact made, which interviews were achieved and why a contact was not secured as an interview.

Two scales were generated: an attitude scale and a readership scale. The attitude scale was composed of positive and negative term selection as well as negative reasons given as to why the library wasn't used more often, as follows.

	Points		Points
Efficient	+1	Inefficient	-1
Easy to get to	+1	Hard to get to	-1
Well organized	+1	Confusing	-1
Pleasant	+1	Gloomy	-1
Exciting	+1	Dull	-1
Well lighted	+1	Poorly lighted	-1
Comfortable	+1	Uncomfortable	-1
Friendly	+1	Unfriendly	-1
Easy to get wants	+1	Hard to get wants	-1
Encouraging	+1	Intimidating	-1
		Restrictive	-1
		Musty	-1
		Stuffy	-1
		Inadequate collections	-1
		Not open enough hours	-1
		Parking/transportation	-1
		Other library factors	-1
TOTAL POINTS	+10		-17

Since computers are unhappy with negatives, we added a base of 20 so all responses would be positive. Anyone with a raw score of +10 or +9 was considered extra enthusiastic. A delineation of "positive" was made for those from +8 to +6. All others were considered "less pleased".

The second generated scale was a readership scale, comprised of: library use, book club membership, newspaper and magazine deliveries, as follows:

	Maximum Points
Newspaper delivery	1
Magazine delivery (1 pt./ea. up to 9)	9
Book club membership	1
Library use (less than 1/mo.=1; 1-4/mo.=2; 5+/mo.=3)	3
Other library use (1 pt./ea. one)	9

Therefore, range from 0 to 23 points.

We set up the readership scale in such a way that approximately one third of the users fell into each group. The assigned categories are as follows:

>   Low readership   = 1-6 points
>   Moderate readership = 7-10 points
>   High readership   = 11-23 points

Questionnaires were edited by a reviewer, who coded the open-ended questionnaires, then were key-punched onto IBM cards and run on the computer. One copy of the print-out will be available to the Task Force on September 14.

Librarians in each community surveyed were also sent a brief questionnaire, so that we could compare respondents' replies to those of the librarians.

A sample of each questionnaire used in the survey can be found in Appendix B.

An oral presentation of the study was given in Augusta on Thursday, August 6. The tables and materials presented at that time were the highlights from the data generated in our survey. They are included in this report in expanded form.

C.   Workshop

An evening and all-day workshop was also given in Orono, at the University of Maine, on August 18 and 19. As agreed earlier, we are not writing up the workshop. We did write up an outline of questions to be resolved, however, and Appendix C is a copy of that write-up.

The body of this report focuses exclusively on the survey data and is organized in five sections: Background; Methodology; Conclusions; Implications; and Summary of Findings.

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III. CONCLUSIONS

We have asked several sets of questions in our study. We asked respondents some very specific questions about their backgrounds, about their use of libraries, and about their feelings toward their library. Their responses are summarized in Part V, Summary of Findings. We also asked ourselves a set of questions, which we have listed below. We have drawn together consumer responses from Part V to give our static responses which we have labeled conclusions, to the questions. We then asked ourselves what these conclusions mean to Maine and the Task Force in terms of action. Our responses to this last question will be found in Part IV, Implications.

Throughout the survey we have sought to answer the following basic questions:

- How are libraries perceived by users and non-users?

- How are they used?

- What affects the use and perception of libraries?

- What is the role of the library in the community and what should it be?

- What do people know about their libraries?

- What competes with the library?

A. **How are libraries perceived by users and non-users?**

1. Attitudes toward libraries are generally favorable, particularly, among users. On our attitude scale,[1] the majority of responses among users and non-users alike were within five points of each other. Over half the users and close to one-third of both non-users and mail respondents scored either 9 or 10 points (extra enthusiastic). Moreover, a substantial number--over a third in each case--scored from 6 to 8 points (in the positive category). Of those in the less pleased category, only a few were, on balance, negative toward libraries. (See Table III-1.)

2. Libraries are seen as: easy to get to, clean, friendly, well organized, efficient, quiet, encouraging, and well lighted, by a large majority of all respondents. (See Table III-2.)

3. Libraries are not seen as particularly exciting youth oriented, or easy-going, particularly among non-users. (See Table III-3.)

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[1] See Methodology for an explanation of how the scale was constructed.

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TABLE III-1

ATTITUDE TOWARD LIBRARIES

Attitude	Type of Respondent		
(minimum score = -17 maximum score = +10)	% Users (n=716)	% Non-Users (n=775)	% Mailed Quest.* (n=326)
Extremely enthusiastic (9-10 pts.)	56.1%	31.7%	32.8%
Positive (6-8)	26.3	30.2	26.6
Less pleased (-17to+3)	17.6	37.9	40.5

* 19% do not have library cards for the libraries surveyed.

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TABLE III-2

MOST FREQUENTLY CHOSEN DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

Term	Users (n=716) % choosing	Non-users (n=775) % choosing	Patron (n=232) % choosing	Unreachable By Phone (n=69) % choosing
Easy to get to	96	87	83	93
Clean	95	80	82	93
Friendly	93	71	83	83
Well organized	93	70	73	70
Efficient	90	67	83	78
Quiet	90	79	76	81
Encouraging	89	67	67	70
Well Lighted	86	71	76	78

TABLE III-3

LEAST FREQUENTLY CHOSEN
DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

Term	Users (n=716) % Choosg.	Non-users (n=775) % Choosg.	Patron (n=232) % Choosg.	Unreachable By Phone (n=69) % Choosg.
Exciting	46%	29%	38%	38%
Youth Oriented	61	38	31	46
Easy Going	69	45	52	59
Busy	69	56	66	54

III-4

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4. There is no widely held felt need for change in the libraries. Non-users and bookmobile respondents were asked if there were any changes they would like to see. Only a fifth in each instance desired changes. (See Table III-4.)

B. How are libraries used?

1. There is a distinct pattern of behavior in the way people use the library. The majority tend to go to the library by themselves, for personal enjoyment, to take out books and materials for home use. People are browsers at heart and do not tend to either use the card catalogue or ask a librarian for help (although librarians do ask them if they need assistance). Many tend to take materials out for others as well as themselves. (See Table III-5.)

2. The behavior pattern described above bears remarkable similarity to other shopping behavior, such as in a supermarket or a book store.

C. What affects the use and perception of libraries?

Use

Use can be categorized in two ways: frequency of use (from non-users up through frequent users) and mode of use (the way in which a respondent uses a library). The former is covered below in points one through eight; the latter in points nine through eleven.

1. Our interviews encompassed a wide range of library usage, from respondents who had never been inside their local library (18% of the non-users) to respondents who went to the library more than once a week (42% of the library patrons). (See Table III-6.)

2. As can be seen, use is not entirely dependent upon the presence of a library card (although we have assumed that in our classification). Some library card holders--5% of the users (see Table V-4 under Summary of Findings)--go to the library less than once a year and another 5% of the users go only once or twice a year. Non-card holders, on the other hand, do use the library--16% of the patrons were non-card holders and some used the library five or more times a month (Table V-92 in the Summary of Findings). Twenty-seven percent of the non-card holders used materials in the library. (See Table III-6.)

3. Frequency of use and the presence of a library card are related, however. In the patron sample (Table V-90 of the Summary of Findings), the heavier the use of the library, the more likely a respondent was to have a library card.

TABLE III-4

SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY

"Are there any changes you would like to see in your
public library which would cause you to use it more often?"

	Satisfied %	Changes %	DK NA %
Non-users	80	20	—
under 20	56	44	-
60 and over	90	10	-

"Are you satisfied with the books, materials and services
available through the bookmobile, or do you think improvements could be made?"

	Satisfied %	Changes %	DK NA %
Bookmobile	49	20	31

TABLE III-5

HOW THE LIBRARY IS USED

Behavior Pattern	Users (n=716)	Patrons (n=232)	Unreachable by phone (n=69)
1) Go alone	53%	73%	62%
2) Pick up materials for others: yes	40	52	49
no	60	46	49
3) Browse	41	38	29
Title in mind	29	12	13
Half and half	24	47	49
4) Know where item is	46	48	33
Look in card cat.	17	32	20
Ask librarian	19	6	16
Only browse	4	11	22
5) Purpose:			
Personal	60	73	61
Business/school	12	14	20
6) Librarian ask help:			
frequently yes	76	31	48
sometimes yes	76	45	35
no	21	21	13
7) Take materials home	82	75	77

TABLE III-6

FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USE

	Less Than 1/Mo.	1-2/Mo.	3-4/Mo.	5/Mo.	N/A
Users (n=716)	23%	34%	23%	16%	4%
Patron* (n=232)	8	24	25	42	1
Unreachable By Phone** (n=69)	41	26	15	17	-

	Never Been	Been There	Go, Use Mat. There	N/A
Non-users*** (n=775)	18%	54%	27%	1%

	Every Time	Every Other Time	Few Times Yr.	Rarely If Ever
Bookmobile (n=76)	34%	15%	8%	43%

*   16% did not have a library card for the library they were visiting.

**   6% did not have a library card for their local public library.

***   12% had had a library card in the past three years.

4. Only 12.4% of the non-users had had a library card in the past
    three years. The group which had a much higher incidence than
    average (almost four times) is the teenage group, as might be
    expected, considering the appeal of the library to young children
    and, often, the school-related introduction to the library. (See
    Table V-68, in Summary of Findings.)

5. Library cards appear to be clustered in families. This is most
    clearly borne out in comparing users' (library card holders) and
    non-users' (non-library card holders) responses to the question:
    do other members of your family have library cards? (See Table
    III-7.) Whereas only 34% of non-users had family members with
    library cards; 71% of users had family members with library cards.
    The same pattern holds for the smaller samples: patrons and
    bookmobile respondents.

6. The appearance of other library cards in the family appears most
    strongly linked to age, marital status, and income, as can be
    seen in Table III-8. Income is the most consistent; as income
    increases, so does the likelihood that family members will have
    cards. It would be expected that respondents with young children
    (under age 20) would be more apt to have other cards in the
    family, and, in two instances, the age concentration indicates
    this: the 31-40 age group has a high percentage of respondents
    indicating other cards in the family. Teenager respondents (the
    reverse side of the coin) also have a high percentage of responses
    indicating other cards in the family.

7. A profile of library card holders and non-library card holders
    gives some indications as to background characteristics which
    are related to use. Users (library card holders) tend to have
    higher incomes except for bookmobile users, where the trend is
    reversed. Since users were obtained randomly from library reg-
    istration files, they should be reliable indicators of the using
    population: 83% were adults over age 20; 17% were teenagers.
    The mix of males and females was roughly 30-70. (See Table III-9.)

8. Since income was closely associated with the presence or absence
    of a library card, one would expect it might also affect frequency
    of use. Yet there is no indication that it does so. (See Tables
    V-3 and V-93.) Frequency of use, in fact, seems to be affected
    most, by city size: frequent use is more associated with small
    towns than large. Surprisingly, frequency of use does not appear
    related to the attitude of the respondent toward libraries.

9. Behavior patterns in the way a library is used are influenced,
    first, by whether the respondent has a library card or not. Lib-
    rary patrons are the only meaningful group where card holders and
    non-card holders were asked the same questions about the way they
    used a library. Although the numbers are small (particularly for
    the non-card holders) and the specific percentages are thus unre-
    liable, the patterns in behavior do show trends. Non-card holders

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TABLE III-7

"DO OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY HAVE LIBRARY CARDS?"

	Yes	No	Don't Know No Answer
Users (n=716)	71.4%	27.4%	1.2%
Non-users (n-775)	34.1	61.8	4.1
Patron (n=232)			
Library card	53.1	37.4	9.5
No library card *	7.9	89.5	2.6
Bookmobile (n=76)			
Library card	55.0	45.0	-
No library card **	25.0	75.0	-
Unreachable By Phone* (n=69)	60.9	37.7	1.4

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  *   16% did not have a library card.
 **   47% did not have a library card.
***    6% did not have a library card.
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TABLE III-8

PERCENT INDICATING OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS
HAVE CARDS, BY RESPONDENT TYPE

	User (n=716)	Non-User (n=775)	Patron (n=232)
Respondent Type			
% Responding	71%	34%	46%
Age			
20 and under	86	36	75
21-30	66	29	41
31-40	88	61	56
41-50	82	51	41
51-60	55	28	46
61+	40	10	26
Marital status			
married, child. under 20	87	58	
married, no child. under 20	51	13	
not married (divorced)	36	15	
Income			
less than $5,000	47	18	25
$5,000-9,999	66	36	39
$10,000-14,999	72	41	55
$15,000+	80	59	53

TABLE III-9

A PROFILE OF LIBRARY CARD HOLDERS AND NON-HOLDERS*

	User (n=716) %	Non-user (n=775) %	Not Reachable By Phone (n=69) %	Patron (n=232) %		Bookmobile (n=76) %	
				LC[1] (82%)	NLC[2] (16%)	LC[1] (53%)	NLC[2] (48%)
Income							
under $10,000	19	69	75	47	46	78	41
over $10,000	79	31	25	53	42	15	31
Age							
less than 20	17	10**	23	11	11	13	3
20-30	14	16	35	15	24	18	6
31-50	42	34	23	33	37	38	39
over 50	27	40	17	37	25	35	39
Education							
complt. HS or less	30	24	24	27	18	20	19
some coll.	24	36	28	18	5	33	50
coll. grad. or more	27	25	24	24	40	30	14
Sex							
male	29	39***	33	23	17	23	17
female	71	61	67	77	83	77	83

  * note, percents do not include no answers
 ** note, there was an 80% adult, 20% teenage quota, which could not be filled
*** note, the quota should have generated a 70-30 ratio.
 1 library card holder
 2 non-library card holder

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are more likely to go to the library in a research vein, using the card catalogue. (See Table III-10.)

10. Behavior is also strongly influenced by the library itself. (See Table III-11.)

11. Background characteristics are also important in influencing the way libraries are used. As might be expected, women in their thirties with young children tend to go with others rather than by themselves, while older people and single people tend more often than the average to go by themselves. Males are less likely to pick up materials for others, as are infrequent users and low income respondents. Conversely, high income respondents are more apt to pick up materials for others. (See Table III-12.)

Attitude

1. Probably the most influential determinant of attitude is the library itself. Although we suspect that the librarian herself is the most powerful component of the influence of the library (based on other studies of like institutions), we have no basis of proof of this assumption from the survey. (See Tables V-64 and V-110 in Summary of Findings.)

2. The presence of a library card and a favorable attitude are related, as Table III-13 indicates. However, we have no way of documenting whether the holding of a library card affects attitude or attitude affects whether one will obtain and use the library card. The latter direction would appear to be the more likely relationship.

·3. Age and income affect attitude considerably. Among users, the younger the respondent is and the higher the family income, the less pleased he is with the library. (See Table V-63 of Summary of Findings.)

D. What is the role of the library in the community? What do respondents feel it should be?

1. As seen above, most respondents appear satisifed with their library and few people appear anxious to have the library make significant changes (with the exception of some of the teenagers).

2. Respondent satisfaction, moreover, is in the face of a lack of knowledge about what libraries actually offer in the way of services, programs and materials on loan (as will be seen under question E below), as well as a general lack of desire for programs, services and loans of other than printed media. (See Tables III-14 and III-15.)

TABLE III-10

LIBRARY PATRONS' USE OF THE LIBRARY, BY TYPE*

Behavior	Patrons	
	Card Holder	Non-Card Holder
	(n=190)	(n=38)
	%	%
go alone	72	79
browse	39	34
look item up in catalog	27	55
know where item is	53	18
go for personal enjoyment	79	47
go for business/school	10	32

* non-users are excluded, therefore the base is 228 rather than 232.

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TABLE III-11

SELECTED USER BEHAVIOR PATTERNS, BY SELECTED TOWNS

Town	Behavior Pattern*		
	Know Where Item Is	Look Item Up	Ask Librarian
	%	%	%
Total	46	17	19
Bangor**	12	54	19
Biddeford	13	53	13
Bridgton	84	--	16
Eastport	39	3	42
Bowdoinham	89	--	8

	Librarian Asks Respondent	Librarian Doesn't Ask
	%	%
Total	76	21
Bangor**	54	42
Thomaston	97	3
Greenville	96	4

* excludes no answers, mixed answers
** closed stacks

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TABLE III-12

SELECTED USER BEHAVIOR PATTERNS BY SELECTED USER CATEGORY

User Category	User Behavior*	
	Go Alone	Go With Others
	%	%
Total	53	34
Age		
31-40	31	49
51-60	72	6
60 +	69	2
Marital Status		
married, children under 20	36	45
married, no children under 20	74	17
not married	81	17

	Pick Up Materials For Others	Don't Pick Up Materials For Others
	%	%
Total	40	60
Library Use		
less than once/mo.	27	73
5 or more times/mo.	56	43
Sex		
male	28	71
Income		
less than $5,000	27	73
$15,000 and over	53	46

* Excludes no answers and mixed answers

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TABLE III-13

ATTITUDE, BY CARD HOLDERS AND NON-CARD HOLDERS

| Attitude | % of Users (n=716) | % of Non-Users (n=775) | % of Patrons | |
			Card (n=190)	No Card (n=38)
Less Pleased	17%	38%	32%	11%
Positive	25	30	29	37
Extra Enthusiastic	54	32	32	47

TABLE III-14

MOST FREQUENTLY FOUND LOANS, SERVICES AND PROGRAMS
BY RESPONDENT TYPE*

	% Indicating			
	Users	Non-Users	Patrons	Non-Reachable by Phone
	(n=716)	(n=775)	(n=232)	(n=69)
Loans				
Records	45	NA	42	38
Services				
Book reserve	88	NA	75	54
Book return slot	63	NA	66	39
Selected reading list	63	NA	45	33
Telephone book renewal	50	NA	22	4
Interlibrary loan	46	NA	38	25
Extended vacation loans	42	NA	10	10
Microfilms	17	NA	55	23
Photocopier	16	NA	52	28
Programs				
Children's story hours	33	13	20	20
Art exhibits	25	7	13	25
Film showings	--	2	2	20

TABLE III-15

MOST FREQUENTLY DESIRED LOANS, SERVICES, AND PROGRAMS
BY RESPONDENT TYPE*

	% Indicating		
	Users	Patrons	Non-Reachable By Phone
	(n=716)	(n=232)	(n=69)
Loans			
Films	24	19	30
Tape recorders	29	19	30
Services			
Listening room	30	26	46
Book delivery to shut-ins	27	24	39
Photocopier	21	13	38
WATS line	18	14	28
Extended loans	15	20	30
Art reproductions	--	20	30
Telephone book renewal	14	19	28
Camera loans	19	15	33
Programs			
Film showings	--	--	26
None, don't know**	85	69	22

* Nonusers were omitted since in none of these categories did
they show up in any numbers over 1%.

** Nonusers, 93%.

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3. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to find that the majority
    of respondents feel that libraries should offer more than just
    printed materials (see Table III-16), which would suggest a
    change in role and focus for libraries (from what they think
    libraries offer presently). Yet, few respondents (of the non-
    users and bookmobile respondents, who were asked) indicated a
    need for any significant changes.

4. Such conflicting attitudes (i.e., libraries are fine as is; lack
    of knowledge about or interest in innovative programs, materials
    and services; yet an assertion that libraries should be offering
    these things) as to the function and role of the library are
    similar to other cases on which we have worked where testing has
    indicated that the topic in question had little meaning to the
    general public.

5. The library cannot therefore be seen as a focus of community
    interest, or as a reflection of the community's desires and
    interests. However, it would seem to us this should be the
    library's role.

E. How much do people know about their libraries?

1. There is a large information gap among the general public as to
    what kinds of collections, programs and services are housed in
    their public libraries. (See Part V, Summary of Findings.)

2. Some respondents listed as a deterrent to increased library use
    the need for more information about the library: the need for
    some kind of introduction to what the library offers and how it
    can be used.

F. What competes with the library?

1. There is no clear cut competitor to the library, but the evidence
    seems to indicate that many things compete with the library, due
    to its low salience. Although television is not given frequently
    as a deterrent to library use, this may be due to the sacrosanct
    air of the library (all the positives in the attitude scale). The
    frequent mention of no interest by library users would tend to
    indicate they have no desire to increase their use; the frequent
    mention of "too busy" by non-users would seem to indicate their
    willingness to place many other activities and entertainments above
    using the library. (See Table III-17.)

TABLE III-16

SHOULD LIBRARIES OFFER ONLY PRINTED MATTER?

	% Indicating				
	Users	Non-Users	Patrons		Non-Reachable by Phone
	(n=716)	(n=775)	(n=232)		(n=69)
			LC	NLC	
Only printed - strongly	17	21	13	3	3
Only printed - somewhat	12	9	9	16	12
Don't care	8	17	6	--	15
Other materials* - somewhat	26	21	26	50	36
Other materials* - strongly	37	32	38	26	32

* Such as record players, tape recorders, movie projectors, etc.,
and the records, tapes and films to go with them

TABLE III-17

WHY NOT MORE USE?

	User	Non-User	Patrons		Non-Reachable By Phone	Bookmobile	
			LC[1]	NLC[2]		LC[1]	NLC[2]
	(n=716)	(n=775)	(n=190)	(n=38)	(n=69)	(n=40)	(n=36)
Not interested	45	25	33	16	43	5	28
Library factors (hours/ days open: regulations: personnel: physical plant)	35	13	17	33	32	25	8
Other sources of books	15	30	3	5	4	10	14
Too busy	14	35	5	5	9	10	36
Need more information	11	4	18	21	14	13	--
TV	10	6	7	--	19	5	3
Access problem (transportation: parking)	9	8	13	21	6	28	11

% Indicating

[1]Library card holder
[2]Non library card holder

*16.4% do not have library cards

IV. IMPLICATIONS

In the past thirty years, we have changed from an informationally scarce to an informationally over-abundant society: from service grocery stores to supermarkets; from dependence on printed news media to radio and TV; from reading about the vote to watching it being counted to predicting the count on the basis of the first few percent of precincts counted; from being able to keep abreast of several fields to finding it nearly impossible to keep current in a single specialty; and, in education, from an emphasis on rote learning to an emphasis on "learning how to learn".

All of this has changed the value and use of information and hence the role of the public library as an institution. In the previous situation of information scarcity, the proper functions were to collect, protect and allow dissemination. This still holds true for rare and special collections. But for the local public library today it poses some vital questions because the public has, and increasingly will have, many alternate sources of information for instrumental as well as pleasurable purposes.

In this setting it is significant that the public library does not appear in our survey as a focal point or even a reflection of its community. It is significant also that in our survey the library's largest group of potential users, the young, are also the source of greatest lack of enthusiasm and apathetic assertions of some more or less unspecifiable change. These are the precursors of institutional ennui and demise. Institutions are not violently disposed of, they are allowed to become irrelevant, enfeebled and, to the extent they do no societal harm, ignored. This then is the challenge of the local public library, to become the focal point and reflection of its community in a societal setting of over-abundant information. The keys are found in the words: become, community, and information. To assess resources in view of past objectives will indeed identify resource shortages which need supplementing. However, if the past objectives are not relevant to increasingly larger segments of the public, such expenditures can result in one's becoming what one should have been but being at the same time even further from what one should be. Thus the challenge of the library requires its attempting to understand how its community uses information and enlisting its community's help in defining an institutionally vital role. In this way the library can identify what it should become.

Institutional change is not easy and success cannot be guaranteed, but it is the real challenge to and the reason for the Task Force's existence. The Task Force has begun to cope with the issues as is shown in its workshop suggestions, but it needs to continue by: (1) assuring a source of resources which can be used to help local public libraries understand their communities and develop the role of an informational focal point; (2) by evaluating results plus sharing the information gained throughout the state; and (3) by undertaking to plan what successful local change means in terms of statewide cooperation, support and funding.