5-8-2003

A study of adult patron library use and satisfaction with the Federal Street branch of the Camden City Free Public Library

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A STUDY OF ADULT PATRON LIBRARY USE AND SATISFACTION

WITH THE FEDERAL STREET BRANCH OF THE

CAMDEN CITY FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

by
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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 5, 2003

Approved by_____
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Date Approved ___May 8, 2003___

ABSTRACT

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A STUDY OF LIBRARY USE AND PATRON SATISFACTION
WITH THE FEDERAL STREET BRANCH OF THE
CAMDEN CITY FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
2002/03
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The purpose of this study was to determine how adult patrons were using the

Federal Street branch of the Camden City Free Public Library. Additionally, the study

measured patron satisfaction with the current level of service that the library was

providing. One hundred and three responses were collected over an eight week period.

Patrons were asked to evaluate twelve services based on present level of service and

importance. From these responses the researcher was able to calculate satisfaction. The

services were divided into three service areas: Information Services, Print and Electronic

Resources and Library Services. Results of the survey showed that adult patrons were

using their library for a number of reasons however, computer access stood out as a main

service used by patrons. Overall patrons appeared to be very satisfied with the services

provided by the Federal Street Branch of the Free Public Library. Patrons were highly

satisfied with Library Services and Print and Electronic Resources areas respectively.

Acknowledgements

There are several people who I wish to thank because without their love support and firm belief in me I do not believe I would have made it through this difficult process.

To Drs. Shontz and Willett thank you for all your patience and guidance during this time.

To Martin and Judy you have always been there for me in more ways than I can count. You are truly the best friends that a person can ever have.

Maisha thank-you for giving me that swift verbal kick-in the pants every time I felt like giving up and convincing me to go to Camden.

And Dad everything that I am and do has only been possible because of the love and guidance that you have always given me.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Background

With the addition of new technology and the infusion of varied ethnic

groups into urban centers, the information needs of the community are ever

changing. McGinn wrote:

> We rarely stopped to consider why our customer base was taking on a
>
> distinctive white middle-class tint, why people of color or people of a
>
> foreign language in our communities felt that they were not welcome in
>
> the public library, why we were becoming irrelevant . . . the increased
>
> number of customers did not devastate our credibility; our inattention to
>
> human needs of large segments of our society did so (1993, p.117).

If public libraries are to continue to be important information centers for the communities

that support them, public librarians must find new ways to measure service quality,

improve services and improve patrons' satisfaction.

Problem Statement

For years public libraries have been the information centers of their communities,

providing access to information and resources. As the Internet has changed the way some

people access information, the library's role in the community must change to adapt to

the concerns of the urban community. At the very least, libraries should support other

agencies concerned with providing information by acting as a "gathering and collating

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service" for them (Aitchison, 1991, p.12). Today, there is evidence that the information needs of patrons are not being met, "especially in urban public libraries".

> New ethnic groups, by their numbers, are making dramatic impacts on communities, bringing with them old-country cultures and having to adapt totally new ones. The needs of traditional minorities who may have been here for generations--the blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics--have yet to be resolved (Jacob, 1988).

The lack of materials and poor facilities in some urban libraries demonstrate neglect by both local government and patrons. Urban public libraries need to improve the quality of services; the better the service, the higher the satisfaction of the patron is likely to be. Urban public libraries need to provide information and resources that address their communities' needs.

A primary example of the problems facing urban centers is the city of Camden, New Jersey. Camden is not the largest urban center in the United States; however, this nine square mile area has problems indicative of many of the nation's largest urban centers. In fact, the city of Camden is one the poorest cities in New Jersey. It neighbors Philadelphia, one of the country's largest and oldest cities. Camden since the 1970s has seen a mass exodus of people and business. The city's poor business infrastructure means fewer jobs for city residents and reduced tax revenue for the city. As with many urban centers today, Camden's physical environment has deteriorated, making life difficult for residents and the city unattractive to businesses and middle class families. Efforts have been undertaken to encourage the city's revitalization. Recent improvements in the city's education system and the addition of charter schools have helped to push a proposal for

two new libraries; these facilities would provide study space and free computer access to Camden residents. The founders of Camden's Promise and Camden Academy Charter High School plan to build a community center library facility. This facility would serve not only students and faculty of Camden's Promise and Camden Academy Charter High School but also the adults in the area. In order for the needs of the adult patrons to be met, a case study needed to be developed so that needs of this population could be adequately addressed in the planning of this facility. A case study of adult patrons and their use of the city's library system provided the best source of information as to the services most used and which ones were viewed as important to adults.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to determine how adult patrons were using the Federal Street branch of the Camden City Free Public Library. Additionally, the study measured patron satisfaction with the current level of service that the library was providing. If patrons' needs are not catered to, then public libraries will become irrelevant in their lives. McGinn(1993) in the article "Coalition Building, Fund Leveraging, and Role Changing" stated the importance of addressing communities' needs:

> As our libraries have become irrelevant to most people's lives; our
>
> profession slowly fades into extinction. When every citizen can truly feel
>
> that he or she is allowed to enter a public library, that there will be
>
> information services available that will help meet his or her needs, no
>
> matter how mundane those needs may seem to be. When professional

librarians providing these services represent all races and colors in our society, then our public libraries will truly be public (p.119).

Conceptual Framework

The researcher's project was designed around three primary ideas:

1. Patrons have the right to evaluate library service.

2. Satisfaction can be measured.

3. The only way satisfaction is to be achieved is for libraries to understand their patrons' basic needs.

Patron rights. Primarily, the library is for the patrons' use, and they should have a voice in judging the types of services that are offered. According to Chwe (1978) in the article "A Model Instrument for User-Rating of Library Service":

The growing trend is that users should play the major role in the evaluation of library service. The number of books, circulation figures, or even the number of library staff would not be accurate indicators of the level of service (p. 46).

Satisfaction can be measured. Patrons do indeed have the right to evaluate library services. The second idea in this framework is then, how do you measure satisfaction? In the article, "User Satisfaction with Library Service," D'Elia and Walsh list two approaches for measuring user satisfaction: objective and subjective measurement. In objective measurements of satisfaction, the library itself is the subject. The resources the library has available to meet patron demand would be the determining measure of satisfaction. In subjective measurements, the patron is the key element in determining level of satisfaction. In this approach, the users' opinions of how well the library has

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performed in meeting their demands determines the level of satisfaction. There is some debate as to which method of measurement provides the better indicator of user satisfaction. The researcher has decided to use the subjective model for the case study because it supports the first idea of the study's framework.

Understanding patron needs. The final idea of this framework is addressed by Chwe (1978): "The effort to recapture the true purpose and function of the library is apparent among the many concerned. The focus of librarianship is to understand the basic needs of users and to fulfill those needs" (p. 47).

<div align="center">Questions to be answered</div>

The following research questions were posed: How are adult patrons using the library? Are patrons satisfied with the current level of service being provided? What services are being used the most? What services do patrons value the most? What services need to be reevaluated?

<div align="center">Research Methodology</div>

Many studies examined patron use of the public library. The dilemma with such studies is how to measure patron satisfaction. Drawing comparisons among studies proves difficult due to the differences in methodology and in the definitions of satisfaction. Vavrek found:

> The difficulty of making comparisons among research studies because of
> their varying techniques and definitions should not be interpreted as a
> criticism. But as it now stands, the research community is not developing a
> usable base of complementary information. Instead of one investigation

building on another, each comes close to being an intellectual island (2000).

The researcher chose a questionnaire as the data collection method for this case study. The questionnaire was used to chart both patron satisfaction and their perceptions of service quality of the main branch of the Camden City Free Public Library. The questionnaire asked patrons to evaluate a series of library services. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the researcher rated the library's service quality and gauged the importance of each service to patrons.

Definitions of Terms

The researcher used the following definitions for the purposes of this paper. The focus of this paper is on urban public libraries. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines urban as "of or relating to characteristic of, or constituting a city." (1986, p.1298) The definition of the public library comes from the ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science:

> Any library which provides library services without charge to all residents
> of a given community, district or region. Supported by public or private
> funds, the public library makes its basic collections and services available
> to the population of its legal service area without charges to individual
> users, but may impose charges on users outside its legal service area.
> Products beyond the library's basic services may or may not be provided
> to the public at large and may or may not be provided without individual
> charge (1983, p.181).

But what is a patron? Once again the ALA Glossary provides us with a definition of patron. Here the word patron is abandoned for the phrase library user. However, for the purpose of this study the researcher will use the term patron and library user interchangeably. A library user is:

Any person who uses library materials or its services; preferred to the term reader, since the library collection includes materials that may be read, viewed, or listened to and to the patron, which denotes a library advocate or supporter (1983, p.132).

Other definitions for this study were of the phrases: library use, customer satisfaction and service quality. For the purposes of this paper the researcher used Chwe's definition of library use. According to Chwe,

Although the library service may contain a variety of connotations such as reference service, lending service, outreach service, technical service, community service, and book mobile service, it is specified here as the quality of particular areas of service in fulfilling the expressed needs of library users (1978, p.46).

Throughout this case study, the researcher used the terms "satisfaction" and "user satisfaction" interchangeably. In the study entitled "User Satisfaction with Library Service", D'Elia and Walsh defined satisfaction as the degree to which the library was able to meet the demands of the user (1983, p. 109).

The definition of service quality was found in the book, Assessing Service Quality. Hernon and Altman viewed service quality as multidimensional idea with two critical dimensions that were content and context. Content refers to obtaining what

prompted the visit-particular materials or information, study space, or acceptable substitute. Context covers the experience itself: interactions with staff, ease or difficulty in navigating the system, and the comfort of physical environment (1998, p. 8).

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumed that public libraries do play a role in providing social services for library patrons. It was further assumed that library patrons know what their needs are but have a hard time articulating those needs and whether those needs are being met. Urban public libraries do not have the resources to meet all of their patrons' needs; therefore, both service quality and patron satisfaction suffer. This study was limited to one urban public library branch in southern New Jersey and to the perceptions of selected library users. The study was also limited by duration of the study.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Studies and articles written on the subjects of library use, patron satisfaction, and

the role of the public library in society seek to answer a number of questions. The

fundamental question must be: How does the public library contribute to society? Based

upon the literature, the researcher noticed the following trends that influenced the

development of the study's framework: 1) there is a difficulty in drawing comparisons

among studies, because the definitions of what actually constitutes both library use and

the measurement of patron satisfaction differ from study to study; 2) the roles the public

library assumes within the community affect patron satisfaction; 3) subjective

measurement of satisfaction provides a valuable interpretation of the public library's

importance within a community. This literature review is organized into three parts: The

first part examines the impact and the roles of the public library, section two reviews the

measurement of satisfaction; and section three examines the debate of satisfaction verses

service quality.

The Role and Impact of the Public Library

A Clarion University study questioned the impact of the public library and the

library community's commitment to its patrons (Vavrek, 2000). Students in the Clarion

University Department of Library Science conducted phone interviews from June to

September, 1998. The results of survey came from a pool of 1,057 usable responses. Vavrek's study concentrated on adult patron use in three primary areas: the purpose in using the library, the impact of the library, and how the library made patron's lives better. Vavrek found that it was possible to demonstrate the impact of the public library system on American lives, "Evidence suggests that, for over half of the public, the library serves as a multiplex of significant services and resources. In fact it would be difficult to identify an institution providing comparable services" (2000).

Varvek attempted to draw comparisons with other studies that were done on the same subject. The problem that arose with this was that although these studies may have had similar purposes, Varvek failed to mention information about the age of the studies used or their methodologies so the researcher was forced to question the data being compared. The difference in how each of these studies was conducted made drawing comparisons rather difficult. In fact the only comparison that can be made that each study had significant number of responses that was in favor of the public library system. Beyond that any attempts at further comparisons between these different studies is likely to be difficult and irrelevant. In fact Vavrek's own explanation of his study's methodology is incomplete and the discussions of the findings appears incomplete. Vavrek's study does provide insight into other variables that affect customer satisfaction and provides insight into the current state of the public library within American society. But the failures to explain the Clarion University study's methodology and the methodologies of the studies used to draw these conclusions limit the overall effectiveness of Vavrek's argument. The roles that public libraries assume within a community influence user satisfaction. There is debate as to whether or not public

libraries are making a difference within their communities. Despite the recent findings of the Clarion University study, many librarians believe that the true nature of librarianship has been lost. McGinn stated that public libraries have changed and that they no longer reflect the populations among which they are located. McGinn's argument was based on the following idea: What behavioral patterns would be established by librarians who append the phrase "and I want to help people" to their reasons for their career choice (1993, p. 119)?

It was clear based upon the literature and the studies reviewed that the true nature of librarianship revolves around the idea of service. According to the literature the value of the library and the services it provides is determined early in the planning process. It is during the planning process where the libraries' core mission and goals are developed and it is during this time where the library assumes certain roles and it is from these roles the actual services the library provides are determined. But there is more to the process than just planning as McClure pointed out in <u>Planning and role setting for public libraries</u>:

> There is no magic formula for library excellence, many factors contribute to the quality of a public library. Librarians must be able to describe accurately the existing conditions of the library and the factors affecting that condition. Second, they must have a vision and be able to state clearly what the condition and services of the library should be. And finally, they must be able to implement activities and evaluate their progress realizing this vision (McClure).

McClure identified eight core roles of the public library in society. It is important to note that it would be impossible for any one library to address all these roles:

- Community Activities Center-*the library is the central focus point for community activities, meetings and services.*

- Community Information Center-*the library is a clearinghouse for current information on community organizations, issues, and services.*

- Formal Education Support Center-*the library assists students of all ages in meeting educational objectives established during their formal courses of study.*

- Independent Learning Center-*the library supports individuals of all ages pursuing a sustained program of learning independent of any educational provider.*

- Popular Materials Library- *the library features current, high demand, high interest materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.*

- Preschoolers' Door to Learning- *the library encourages young children to develop an interest in reading and learning through services for children, and for parents and children together.*

- Reference Library- *the library actively promotes timely, accurate, and useful information for community residents.*

- Research Center- *the library assists scholars and researchers to conduct in-depth studies, investigate specific areas of knowledge, and create new knowledge.*

However these roles serve as a basis for developing the services and the mission of the public library. Furthermore it is the successful application and implementations of these roles that will later aid in evaluating the library success but also enforcing the relevance of the library within society.

McGinn identified four roles that public librarians needed to adopt in order to reverse current trends. Patrons must see their librarian as a job provider, a heath provider, as a mentor, and a social service information provider (1993, p 117). McGinn maintained the adoption of new roles for public libraries and librarians was important if libraries are going to become relevant to our communities.

The Roles of the Public Library in Society: The Results of a National Survey conducted by D'Elia provided insight from the general public and a national sample of community opinion leaders. Both groups were asked to evaluate the importance to their community of the ten different roles of the library. According D'Elia the following were the roles of the public library:

Community activities center;

Center for information about the community;

An educational support center;

A learning center for adult independent learners;

A recreational reading center of popular materials and best-

sellers;

A discovery and learning center for pre-school children;

An information center for community business;

A general information center for community residents;

A research center for scholars and researchers;

A comfortable, quiet place were residents could go to read,

think or to work?

The study's purpose was to describe for public librarians what the public

considers to be the important roles of the public library in society. "Knowing what the

community is willing to support financially is crucial to the success of the resources

acquisition and allocation process" (D'Elia, 1990, p.2). It is important to note that

traditionally there were eight basic roles of the public library, but for the purposes of this

study D'Elia divided the library's research role into two distinct areas creating in effect

two additional roles. Participants identified the following roles as important. The library

as a community center, a community information center, a formal education support

center, an independent learning center, a popular materials library, a preschooler's door

to learning, a reference library and a research center. The survey revealed two important

roles for urban public libraries. The first one deals with two specific reference roles:

reference services to businesses in the community and reference services to individual.

The second calls for the recognition that the library serves as a destination for social

interaction or a workplace from home. The reason why this study was important is that

the roles of a library represent what the library is trying to do and who the library is

trying to serve.

<div align="center">The Measurement of Satisfaction</div>

Drawing comparisons between the growing number of library-use and

patron satisfaction surveys was difficult because of the various approaches in the

measurement and interpretation of the research. Two studies done by Chwe and

D'Elia/Walsh examined the very nature of the library-use and satisfaction debate as well as the role of the public library within the community.

Chwe in his article entitled: "A Model Instrument for User-Rating of Library Services" revealed the importance of measuring library service through the examination basic human needs. The previous trend in determining library satisfaction focused on physical counts.

It was unclear which method of measurement provides the best indicator of user satisfaction. Chwe acknowledged two methods for the identification of library indicators that serve to measure services:

1) An analysis of the process of giving and receiving library service, in which services would be evaluated in terms of service goals and user needs and expectations as defined by the user; 2) An analysis which would relate library goals and services to other indicators of intellectual, social, or economic conditions, such as educational level and concentration of ethnic groups in geographical areas (1978, p.48).

Throughout the literature reviewed by the researcher, it was evident that the importance of patron satisfaction had been understood; however, many models for its measurement were incomplete. Chwe's model instrument was based on the idea that the researcher must identify human needs as they relate to library service. Chwe divided these needs into four major areas: comfort needs, information needs, convenience needs and cooperation needs. Comfort needs concerned the basic environmental elements such as temperature, light intensity, noise level, and color combination. Informational need was defined as the need

for impelling users to come to the library. Chwe divided informational need into two distinct areas: material resources and human resources. Material resources included all types of library collections, tools and systems for the use of library materials. Human resources refered to knowledgeable personnel who mediate between materials and users. Chwe believed that users' coming to the library for recreational needs was important. However, if the other four major areas of human need were satisfied, the users' recreational needs were more likely to be satisfied. "Since a library exists for users, they should participate in judging whether the type and amount of services they regard as important are provided by the library"(Chwe, 1978, p. 46). Convenience needs appeared to be similar to comfort needs. Chwe (1978) explained:

> Whereas the comfort needs are derived from the drive to protect or sustain the psychological and biological organism, and mostly are related to the environment, convenience needs are those which help smooth living and economize mental and physical energy (p.49).

Cooperation needs referred to the relationship between the librarian and the user. This relationship ensures patron satisfaction. Chwe stated, "No matter how good the collections or facilities a library might have, if the relationship between the librarian and the user lacks a rapport, the library is a failure" (1978, p.50). Recreational need was absorbed by the four types of needs identified. When all needs specified here were satisfied, the user was most likely to also fulfill his recreational need. Even when charged with evaluation of the needs of patrons Chwe pointed out the importance of the

relationship between the patron and the librarian. Chwe warned that the role of the librarian was to accommodate the user's needs no matter the specific duty they may have.

The model instrument Chwe designed sought to measure not only user need but user satisfaction. The instrument asked the user to evaluate the library's present condition of a given service followed by the user's own personal evaluation of that service's importance in relation to the user's own needs. The responses were based on a seven-point scale with one being the lowest and seven being the highest. The librarian's goal was to minimize the difference between two scores of A and B. The difference between A and B is the need deficiency. The outcome of each need deficiency score determined the users' level of satisfaction with each service. Chwe's model was to be administered to library users after they used a library service and gave library patrons the opportunity to define their library experience. Chwe's model was designed to be administered in a number of different ways. The researcher could administer the questionnaire to library users as they visit the library; a random sampling could be chosen or several samples could be taken. According to Chwe, the investigation could be done by the library staff or by a third-party. Using this model instrument a researcher could create a need-profile that would illustrate the deficiency gap and which aspects of the library meets or if any exceeds patron needs.

While the purpose of the Chwe instrument was to measure user needs and quality of library service in meeting those needs, Chwe himself ignored a dynamic of library use this model neglects; services rendered to non-users and external services that take place outside the library's physical boundary. There is a fundamental problem with the Chwe model in that it is based totally on patron value judgments of library service. Chwe failed

to explain the negative connotations with patron value judgments. Unfortunately Chwe also failed to share his own experience using this model instrument.

D'Elia and Walsh examined user satisfaction in public libraries (1983). The study had a dual purpose of reviewing the measurement and use of the subjective construct of user satisfaction and a survey of user satisfaction with public library service. D'Elia and Walsh defined satisfaction as the degree to which the library was able to meet the demands of the user.

> In addition, user satisfaction data has been collected for specific services within a library have been used to identify those services for which there is a high degree of user satisfaction (presumably indicating a high level of performance) and those services for which there is a low degree of user satisfaction (presumably indicating a low level of performance) (D'Elia and Walsh, 1983, p. 113).

D'Elia and Walsh gave two approaches for measuring user satisfaction: objective and subjective. In objective measurement of satisfaction, the library itself becomes the subject. The users' opinion of how well the library has performed in meeting their demands determines the level of satisfaction. Debates as to which construct of user satisfaction is valid remain. D'Elia and Walsh provided three points of validation in favor of the subjective measurement, which, according to their findings, was an important indicator of library performance:

> First, it is used to describe a library's level of performance and to compare levels of performance among libraries. Second it's used to diagnose the strengths and weakness of specific services within the library. Third it is

assumed to be a behavioral response to current use … affects the future

behavior of the user toward the library (D'Elia andWalsh,1983, 114).

<p style="text-align:center">Satisfaction versus Service Quality</p>

Recent studies in the area of library use have turned up a new dimension

concerning the idea of service quality in libraries. While most studies focus on the

measurement of satisfaction, more recent models believe that not only is satisfaction

important, but service quality is also. In fact it is believed that it is not satisfaction that

needs to be measured but service quality. Two pieces of literature provide insight into

both patron satisfaction and service quality. The first piece of literature is an article

written by Lincoln entitled "Insights into Library Services and Users from Qualitative

Research" (2002) which examined qualitative methods in library research. The second is

a book written by Hernon and Altman entitled Assessing Service Quality.

Lincoln's article was a secondary analysis of data from a study sponsored by the

Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education. A web-based survey was

administered to over 22,000 users of Association of Research Libraries. The study's

purpose was to assess user perception of quality in the library, and to prepare

recommendations about the ways in which major research libraries might improve

services and/or the collection from the perspective services used. The most important

aspect of the study was that a new instrument was used LibQUAL. LibQUAL was a

derivative of marketing survey instrument called SERVQUAL a widely used survey

given to customers to determine the quality of service rendered. This instrument had five

related dimensions they are: Library as Place, Access and Self-Reliance, Affect of

Service, Reliability, Assurance and Empathy.

The most important aspect of the Lincoln article was an examination of the relationship between libraries and library users and the true nature of library service. According, to Lincoln libraries must adjust their interpretation of what service entails. "Service is a performance-an intricate transaction between two persons who each assumes a roles and scripts, and who will either come to trust one another, or fail to do so" (Lincoln, 2002, p.15).

Summary

The literature noted within this review supports the ideas within the case study's framework. Each of the studies and articles consulted provide insight into the questions and issues that arise in conducting a study measuring patron satisfaction. Separately each piece of literature provides a key answer to the question as to whether the public library contributes to society and, how. After reviewing the literature it is apparent that the library can influence society. It was also clear that technology and other issues have affected the public's perceptions of the public library. If libraries are going to continue to be integral within the communities in which they exist a both patrons and librarians must change so that the needs of the patron can be identified and adequately met by the library. The measurement of patron satisfaction and service quality must come to the forefront if the place of the library in society is going to be maintained.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Despite being only nine square miles in area, Camden City has problems typical of a number of major urban centers across the country. Efforts have been undertaken to encourage the city's revitalization. Recent improvements in the city's education system and the addition of charter schools have given the residents of the city new educational options for their children. The founders of Camden's Promise and Camden Academy Charter High School plan to build a community center library facility. This facility would serve not only students and faculty of Camden's Promise and Camden Academy Charter High School but also the adults in the area. In order to ensure that the needs of the adult patrons can be met, a case study was developed in order to address the needs of this population adequately in the planning of the new facility. A case study of adult patrons and their current use of the city's library system was expected to provide the best source of information as to the services most used and which ones were viewed as important.

The researcher chose the Camden City Free Public Library branch located at 418 Federal Street in Camden, New Jersey, as the site of this case study. The researcher contacted the director of the Camden City Free Public Library, to discuss the project. The research process for this particular study was a patron survey data was collected over an eight week-period.

The instrument chosen by the researcher was a questionnaire based on the design by Chwe (1978). The survey utilized a subjective model that asked the patron to use a five-point scale to evaluate specific library services in two categories. Respondents were asked to evaluate each service according to the library's ability to provide it. Afterwards the respondents rated the service's importance to themselves (see Appendix). The level of satisfaction is the difference between the two scores. Chwe referred to this as the deficiency of need; the higher the difference, the more likely the patron was to be unsatisfied. The survey addressed the following research questions: How are adult patrons using the library? Are patrons satisfied with the current level of service being provided? What services are being used most? What services do patrons value the most? What services need to be reevaluated?

In addition, there were a number of patron variables to consider in this study. These included: What is the patron's highest level of education? What do patrons use the library for? What is the importance of the services that they use? What is the patron's perceived quality of service provided by their branch library? How often do patrons use the library?

While it is important to note that there are a number of benefits to using surveys there is no one perfect method of data collection. According to Zweizig, in the Tell it! manual the disadvantages to using a questionnaire are:

> The data is se lf-reported and it is time consuming to analyze and interpret
>
> results. Questionnaires lack the depth of information that can result from

interviewing; surveys only offer a snapshot of a situation at a particular

point in time (1996 p.124).

Procedures Used

Both the researcher and a library assistant distributed the patron survey. The

library assistant distributed surveys on the third floor of the library as patrons used either

reference services or the library's computers. After patrons completed the survey the

library assistant marked each survey with date distributed, the time of day and the day of

the week. Completed surveys were kept in a folder on his desk for the researcher to

collect.

The researcher conducted randomly selected site visits. During these visits the

surveys distributed by the library assistant were collected. The researcher also distributed

surveys to patrons as they used the library's various services. In the Chwe study, patrons

who were returning items to the circulation desk were excluded from the survey.

However, the researcher chose to include these subjects because all aspects of circulation

constitute use. As patrons finished completing the survey the researcher recorded the date

distributed, the time of day and the day of the week. Upon completion of the

questionnaire portion of the study's data collection the researcher then shared the results

of the study with the director of the Camden City Free Public Library.

Validity and Reliability

Finally, to ensure the questionnaire and the study's validity, the researcher pre-

tested the questionnaire with the teachers of Camden's Promise Charter School and

Camden Academy Charter High School. The members of this pretest group were either

residents of Camden City or were familiar with the city library. All members of the group

were eligible to be patrons of the Camden Free Public Library; however none of the

pretest respondents participated in the final data collection.

References

Chwe, S.S. (1978). A model instrument for user rating of library service. <u>California Libraries</u>. April, 46-53.

Zweizig, D. (1996). <u>Tell it manual: The complete program for evaluating library programs</u>. Chicago: American Library Association.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Procedures/Methods

Over an eight-week period the researcher surveyed one hundred and ten patrons

of the Federal Street branch of Camden Free Public library. Of those surveyed one

hundred and three responses were valid. Table 1 records the distribution of the surveys by

day and time. During this period patrons evaluated twelve services of the library and

answered a patron information survey. Patrons rated the present level of service and the

importance of each service to them. Responses were based on a scale of one to five with

one being the lowest and five being the highest. The patron's level of satisfaction was

defined as the difference between the present level of service and the importance of the
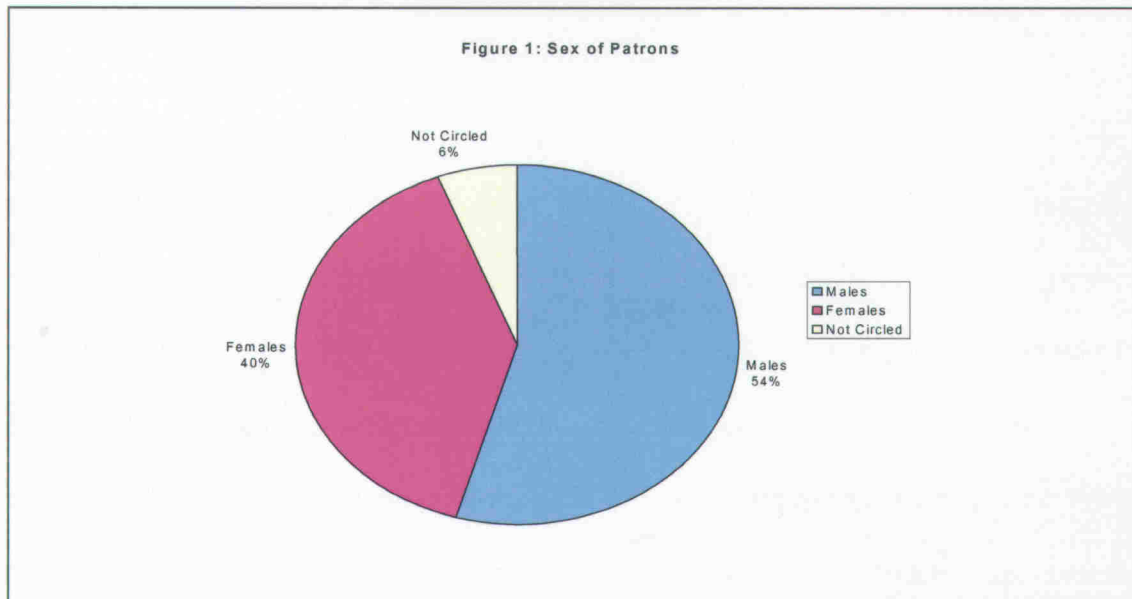
service.

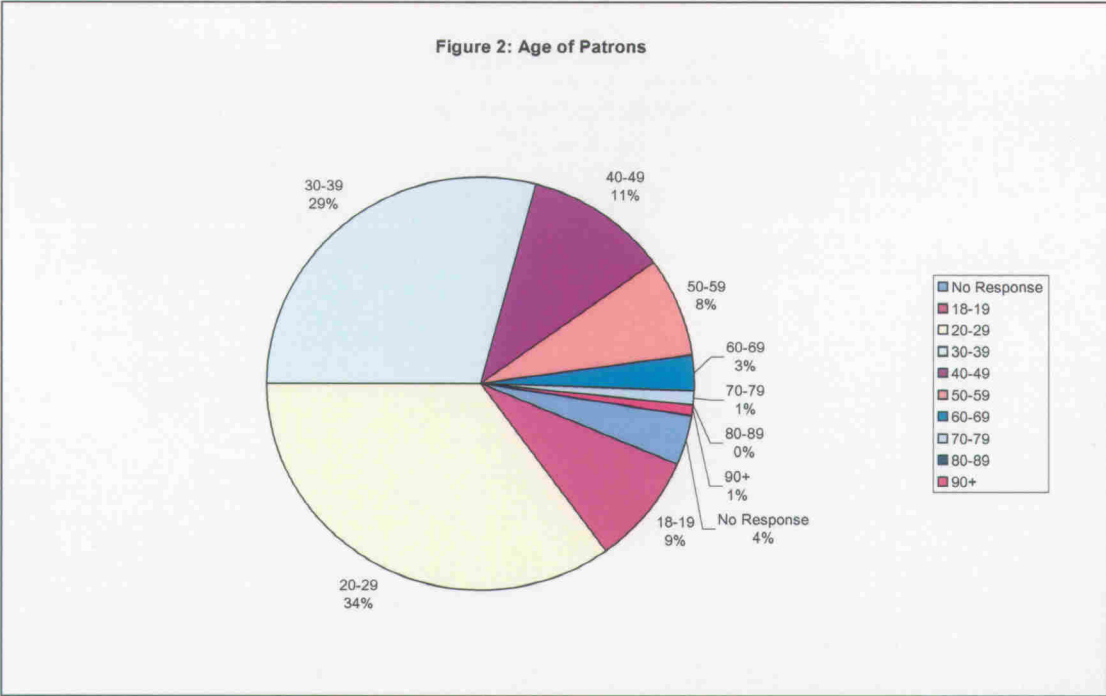| Table 1: Survey Distribution				
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Time Unknown
Monday			5	
Tuesday		17	8	
Wednesday	7	18	3	4
Thursday	1	2		
Friday	3	5	1	
Saturday		15	4	
Day Unknown				10
Total	11	57	21	14

Presentation of Results

The researcher divided the questions in the survey into four categories: Patron Information, Information Services, Print and Electronic Services and Library Services. For each of the library services the researcher charted the patron responses for present level of service, importance of service and overall patron satisfaction.

Patron Information

Patrons provided information on their: sex, age group, education, library visits and library use. Of the one hundred-three patrons of the Camden City library surveyed fifty-four percent were adult males and forty percent were adult females and six percent of the respondents did not indicate their sex (see Figure 1). Each respondent was asked to identify their age group. Of those who responded nine percent were ages eighteen-nineteen; thirty-four percent were adults ages twenty to twenty-nine; twenty-nine percent were adults ages thirty to thirty-nine; eleven percent were forty-forty-nine; eight percent were fifty to fifty-nine; three percent were sixty to sixty-nine and one percent were seventy to seventy-nine or ninety and above. Of those respondents surveyed only four percent failed to indicate their age group (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Sex of Patrons

Not Circled
6%

Females
40%

Males
54%

- Males
- Females
- Not Circled

Figure 2: Age of Patrons

The respondents also reported varied levels of educational experience of those surveyed nine percent reported having "some high school" experience, twenty-five percent identified themselves as "high school graduates", thirty-seven percent reported having "some college" experience, fourteen percent had a "college degree", five percent had "some graduate school" experience and nine percent had a "graduate degree". Of those surveyed only one percent failed to indicate their level of educational attainment (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Patron Education
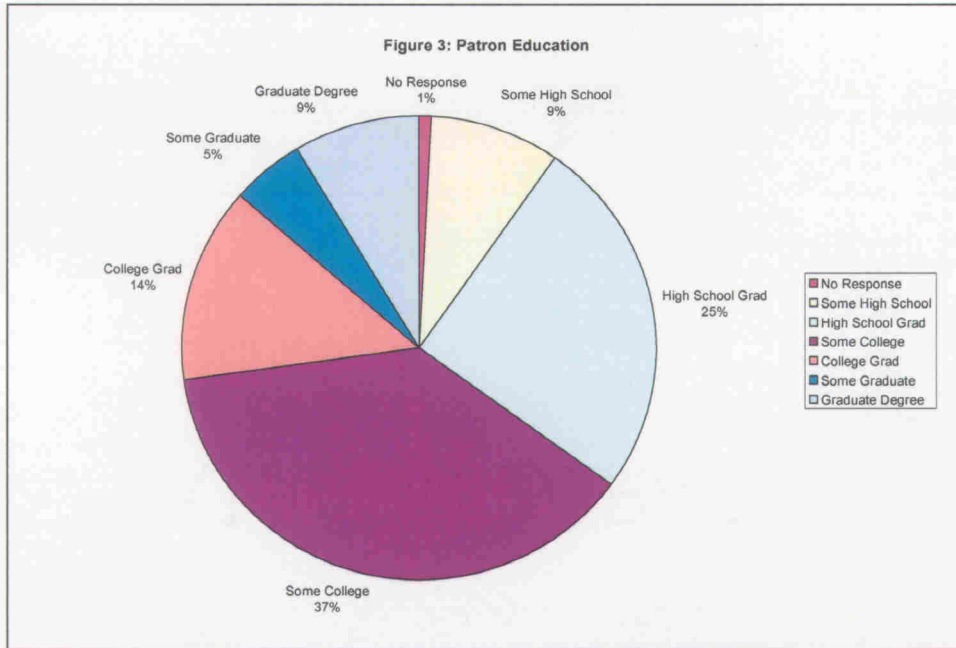
Patrons were also asked to identify how often they visited the library. A total of forty-one percent visited the library "several times a week", twenty-six percent visited once a week, while sixteen percent visited either "once a month" or "everyday". One percent of those patrons surveyed did not indicate how often they used the city library (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Patron Library Visits
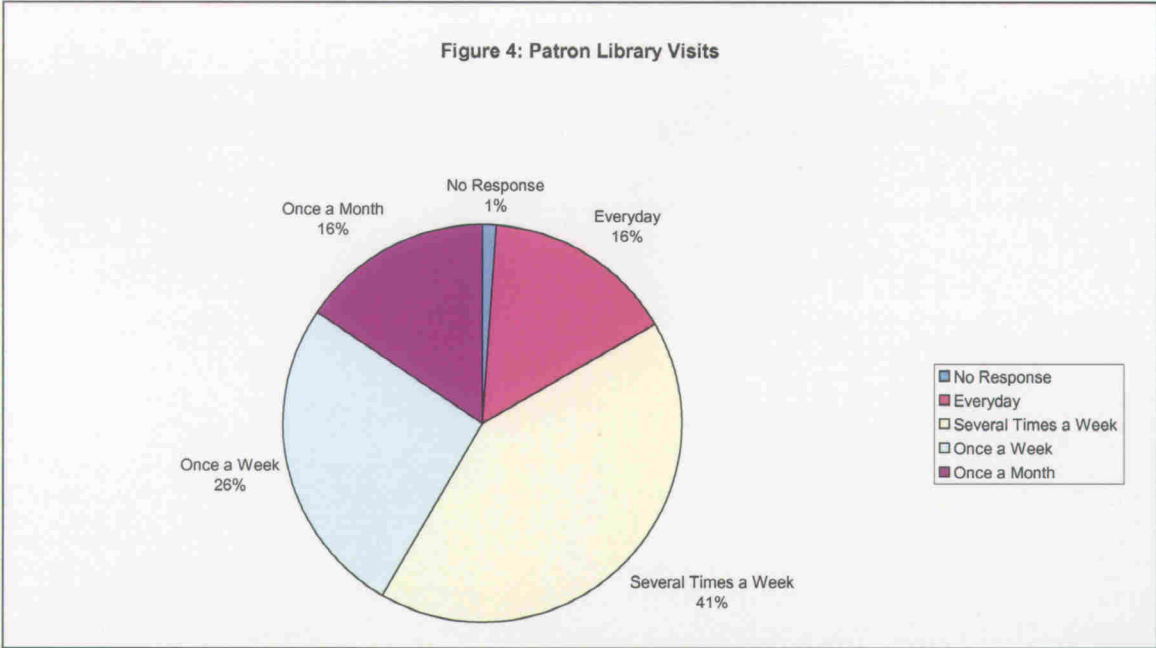
Patrons were asked to identify one primary reason for their visit. Patrons were given the following choices: Research, Computers, Fun, Reference, Movies, Music, Programs, Study, Books and Work. The primary reason given to visit the library was for use of Computers, chosen by twenty-seven percent of the respondents; twenty percent identified Research as their reason, thirteen percent visited the library for access to books, and five percent utilized the library as a recreational center. Three percent used the library either to study or to attend library programs and one percent of those surveyed used the library for work related activities or for its movie collection. Twenty-seven percent of those patrons surveyed identified multiple reasons for using the library (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Primary Library Use

Research 20%, Computers 27%, Fun 5%, Reference 1%, Movies 3%, Music 3%, Programs 13%, Study 1%, Books 27%
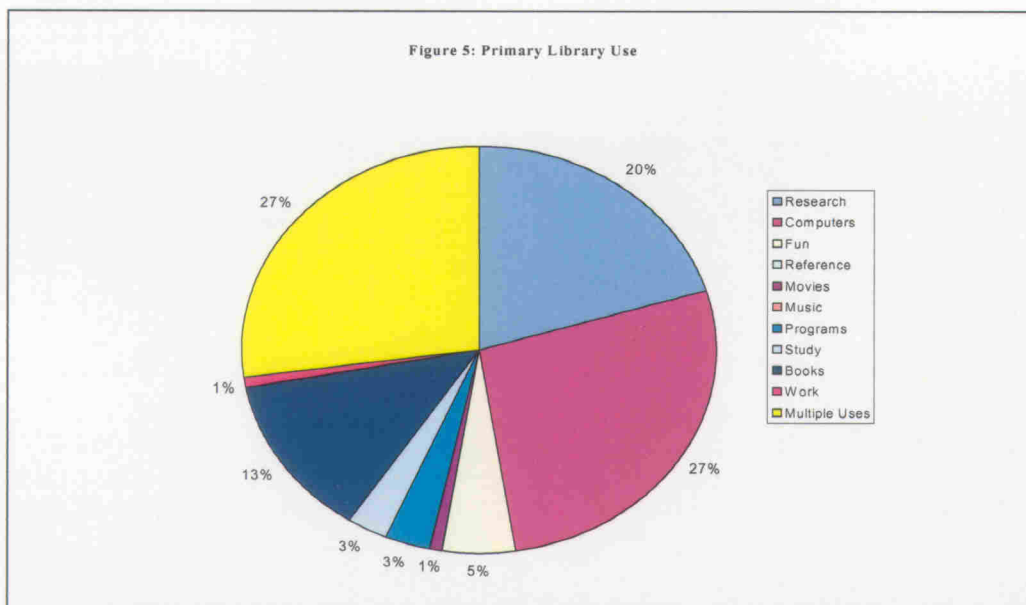
Information Services at the Camden City Library

Present level of Information Services. The following services were given as choices on the survey: Information services: Health Information, Legal Information Social Service information and Education Information. The first half of the survey asked patrons to evaluate the Camden City's present ability to provide Health, Legal, Social Service and Education information (see Figure 6). Education information received a present level score of 5 from sixty-five patrons; fourteen patrons rated the service a 4 or a 3; and three patrons scored the service a 2 or lower. Seven patrons did not evaluate the service. Health Information received a score of 5 from a total of thirty-nine patrons; forty patrons rated the service a 4; seventeen scored the level of service a 3; four patrons scored the service a 2 or lower and eleven patrons did not evaluate the service. Thirty-five patrons ranked the present level of Social Service information a 5; twenty-five scored the service a 4; twenty-one ranked the service a 3; eleven patrons scored the service a 2 or lower and eleven respondents did not evaluate the service. Thirty patrons

ranked the library's present level of legal information a 5; twenty-three ranked the service a 4; twenty-one scored the level of service a 3 and sixteen scored the service a 2 or lower and thirteen patrons did not evaluate the service.


Figure 6: Present Level of Information Service at Camden City Library
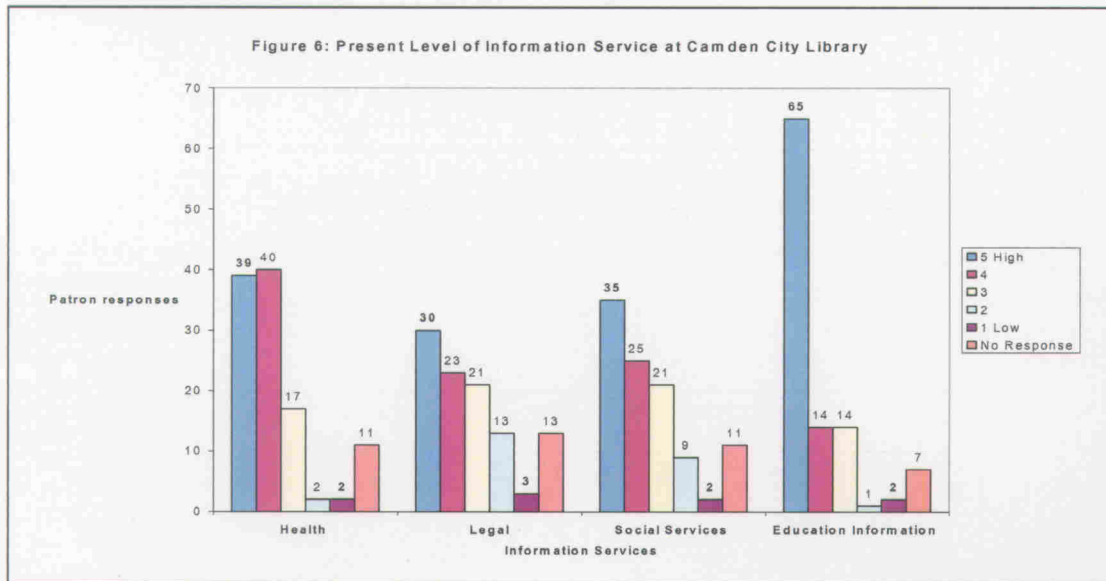
Importance of Information Services. Patrons were then asked to evaluate the importance of each service (see Figure 7). Seventy-five patrons ranked Education information with a score of 5; eleven scored the service a 4; five patrons rated the importance of the service a 3, five patrons ranked the importance of the service a 2 or lower and seven patrons did not answer the question. In the area of Health Information sixty-three patrons ranked its importance a 5; nineteen ranked the importance a 4; seven ranked the service importance a 3; three patrons ranked the service a 2 or lower in level of importance and eleven patrons did not answer the question. Social Services received a score of 5 from forty-six patrons; eighteen scored the importance a 4; seventeen scored the service a 3; eleven patrons scored it a 2 or lower and eleven patrons did not answer the question. Legal Information received a score of 5 from forty-two patrons; sixteen patrons scored the service a 4; twenty-one patrons ranked the level of importance a 3 and

eleven patrons ranked the services level of importance 2 or lower and thirteen patrons did

not answer the question.

Figure 7: Importance of Information Service at the Camden City Library
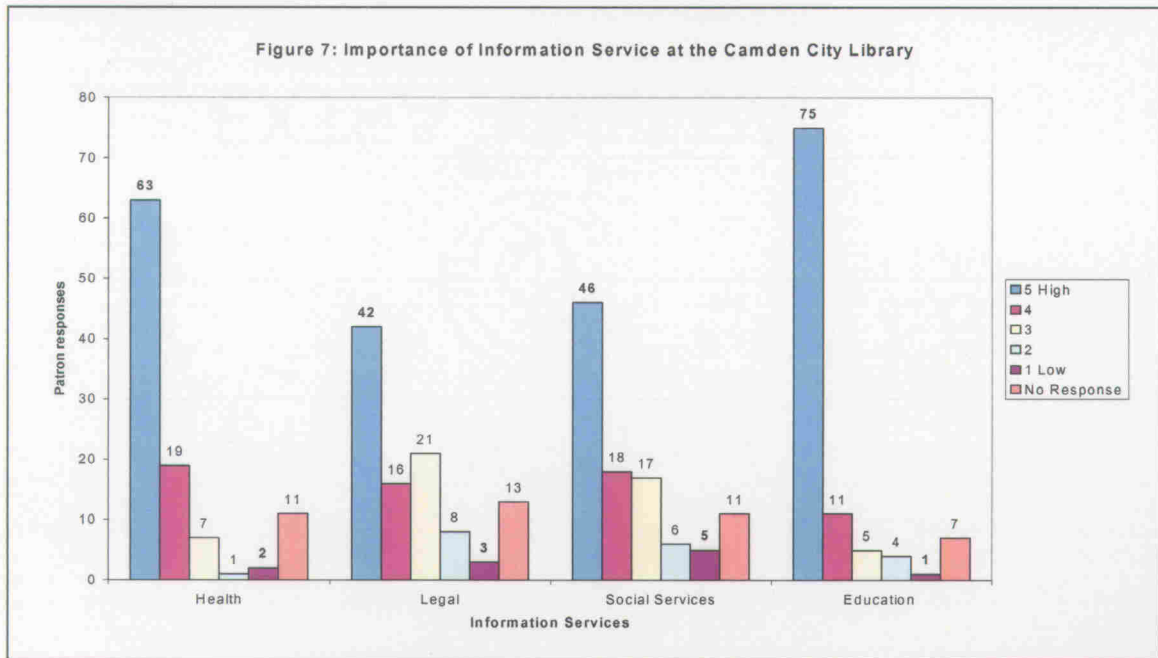
Satisfaction with Information Services. Satisfaction scores are based on the

difference between Present Level of Service and The Importance of the Service with zero

being the highest level of satisfaction (see Figure 8). Education Information services

received a satisfaction score of 0 from sixty-four patrons; twenty-two patrons scored the

service either a 1 or -1; nine patrons scored the service a 2 or -2; one patron scored the

service a 4 or -4 and seven patrons did not answer the question. Social Services

Information received a satisfaction score of 0 from fifty patrons; twenty-nine scored the

service a 1 or -1; six scored the service a 3 or -3 and eleven patrons did not answer the

question. Health information services received a satisfaction rating of 0 from forty-six

patrons; thirty-one scored the service a 1 or -1; eleven a 2 or -2; two patrons scored the

service a 3 or -3; two patrons scored the service a 4 or -4 and eleven patrons did not

answer the question. Legal information services received a satisfaction score of 0 from

thirty-six patrons; forty-two patrons scored the service a 1 or -1, seven ranked the service a 2 or -2; four scored the service a 3 or -3; one patron scored the service a 1 while thirteen patrons who did not answer the question.

Figure 8: Patron Satisfaction with Information Services at Camden City Library
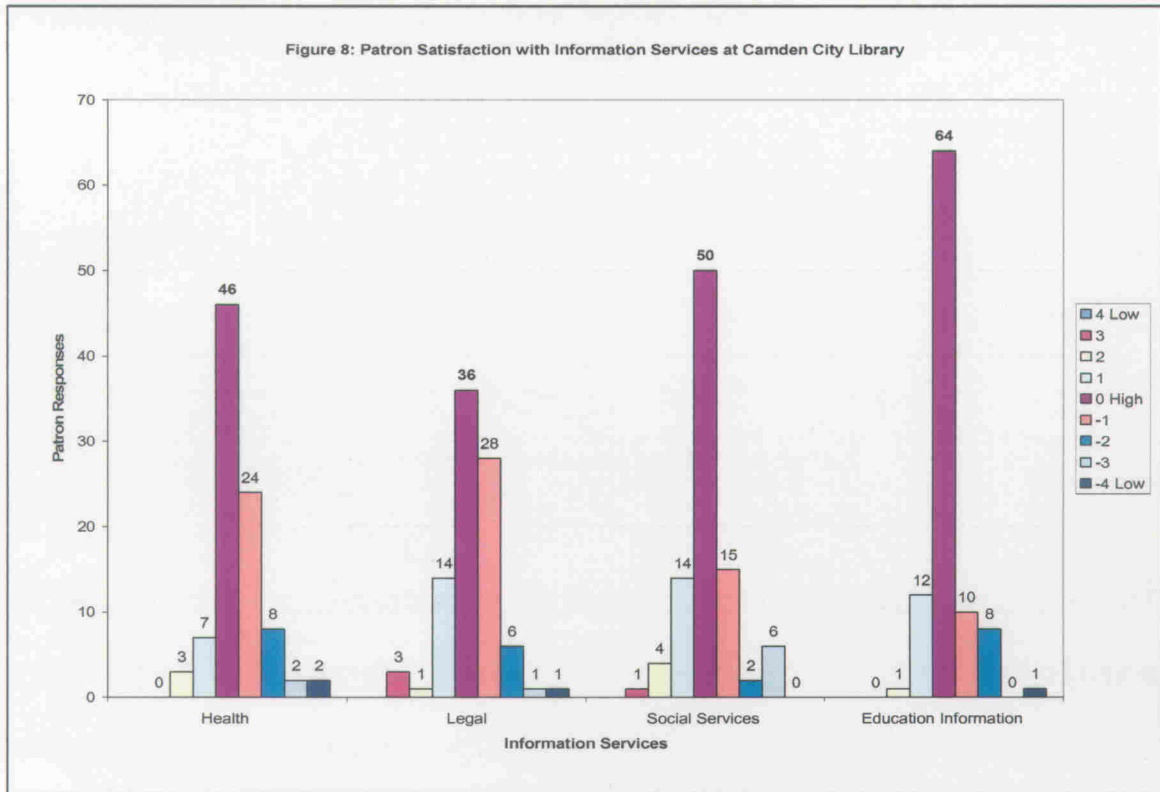
Print and Electronic Resources at the Camden City Library

Present level of Print and Electronic Resources. The following areas of service fall under the heading of Print and Electronic Sources: Newspapers, Magazines, Books and Computer Access (see Figure 9). Computer Access at the library received a score of 5 from fifty-four patrons; eighteen scored the service a 4; seventeen ranked the service a 3; eight patrons scored the service 2; one patron rated the service a 1 and five patrons did not evaluate the service. Forty-six patrons rated the library's Newspaper Service with a score of 5; twenty-seven scored the service a 4; eleven rated the service a 3; three patrons

scored the service a 2; five patrons scored the service a 1 and eleven patrons did not

evaluate the service. Books received a score of 5 from forty-four patrons; thirty-two

patrons scored the service a 4; the service received a score of 3 from twelve patrons; five

patrons ranked the service a 2; two patrons scored the same service a 1 and eight did not

evaluate the service. Magazines received a ranking of 5 from thirty-five patrons; thirty-

six patrons rated the service a 4; fifteen scored the service a 3; five patrons scored the

service a 2; six patrons either scored the service a 1 or did not evaluate the service.

Figure 9: Present Level of Print and Electronic Resources at the Camden City Library
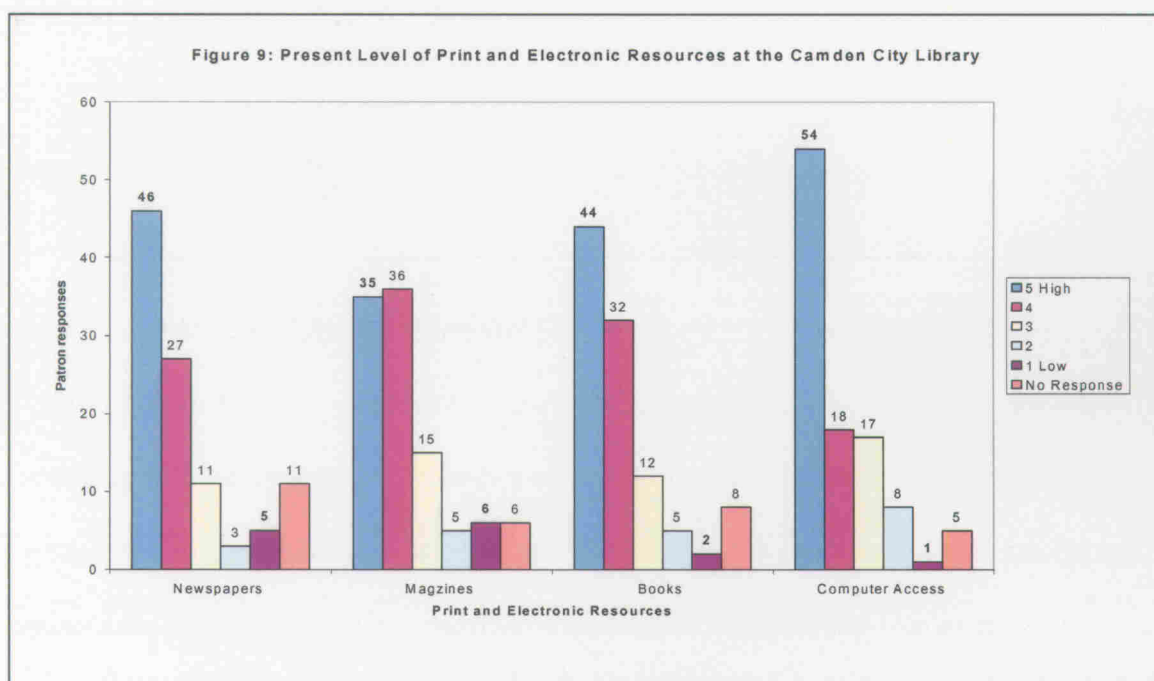
Importance of Print and Electronic Resources. (see Figure 10). Seventy-seven

patrons scored Computer Access a 5; twelve scored the service a 4; four patrons rated the

service a 3; five patrons scored the service a 2 or did not answer the question. Fifty-two

patrons ranked Newspapers a 5 in importance; twenty-one patrons ranked the same

service a 4; twelve patrons rated the service a 3; four patrons scored the importance of the

service a 1 and eleven patrons did not answer the question. Forty-three patrons gave the

importance of Magazine service a 5; twenty-four scored the service a 4 in importance;

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twenty rated the same service a 3; five patron scored the importance of the service a 2 or

lower and six patrons did not evaluate the service. Books received a 5 in importance from

forty-two patrons; thirty patrons rated the importance a 4; sixteen scored the service a 3;

three patrons scored the service a two in importance; four patrons scored the importance

of Books a 1 and eight did not answer the question.

Figure 10: Importance of Print and Electronic Resources at the Camden City Library
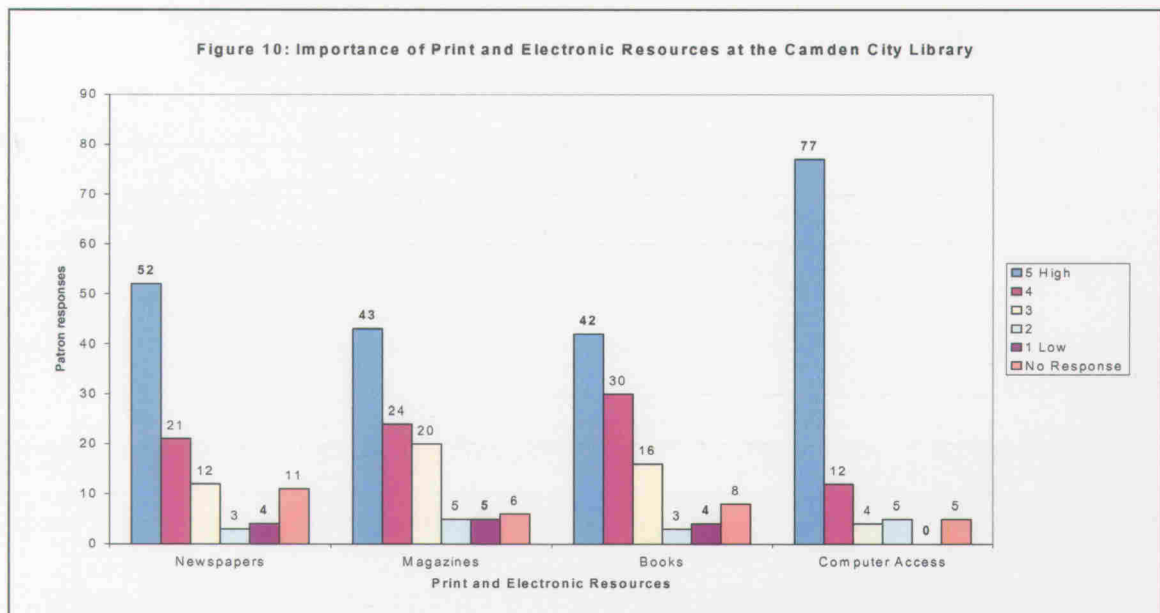
Satisfaction of Print and Electronic Resources. (see Figure 11) The city library's

Books service received a satisfaction score of 0 from sixty-seven patrons; sixteen patrons

scored the service a 1 or -1, eight ranked the service a 2 or -2; four patrons ranked the

service a 3 or -3 and eight patrons did not evaluate the service. Computer Access received

a satisfaction rating of 0 from fifty-nine patrons; twenty-three scored the service a 1 or -1;

eleven ranked the service a 2 or -2; four scored the service a 3 or -3; one patron scored

the service a 4 or -4 and five patrons did not evaluate the service. Newspaper service

received a satisfaction score of 0 from fifty-five patrons; twenty-six scored the service a 1

or -1; seven patrons ranked the service a 2 or -2; four patrons rated the service a 4 or -4

and eleven patrons did not answer the question. Magazines received a satisfaction score of 0 from fifty-three patrons; twenty-seven patrons ranked the service a 1 or -1; nine scored the service a 2 or -2; five patrons scored the service a 3 or -3; three patrons scored the service a 4 or -4 and six patrons did not answer the question.

Figure 11: Patron Satisfaction with Print and Electronic Resources at the Camden City Library
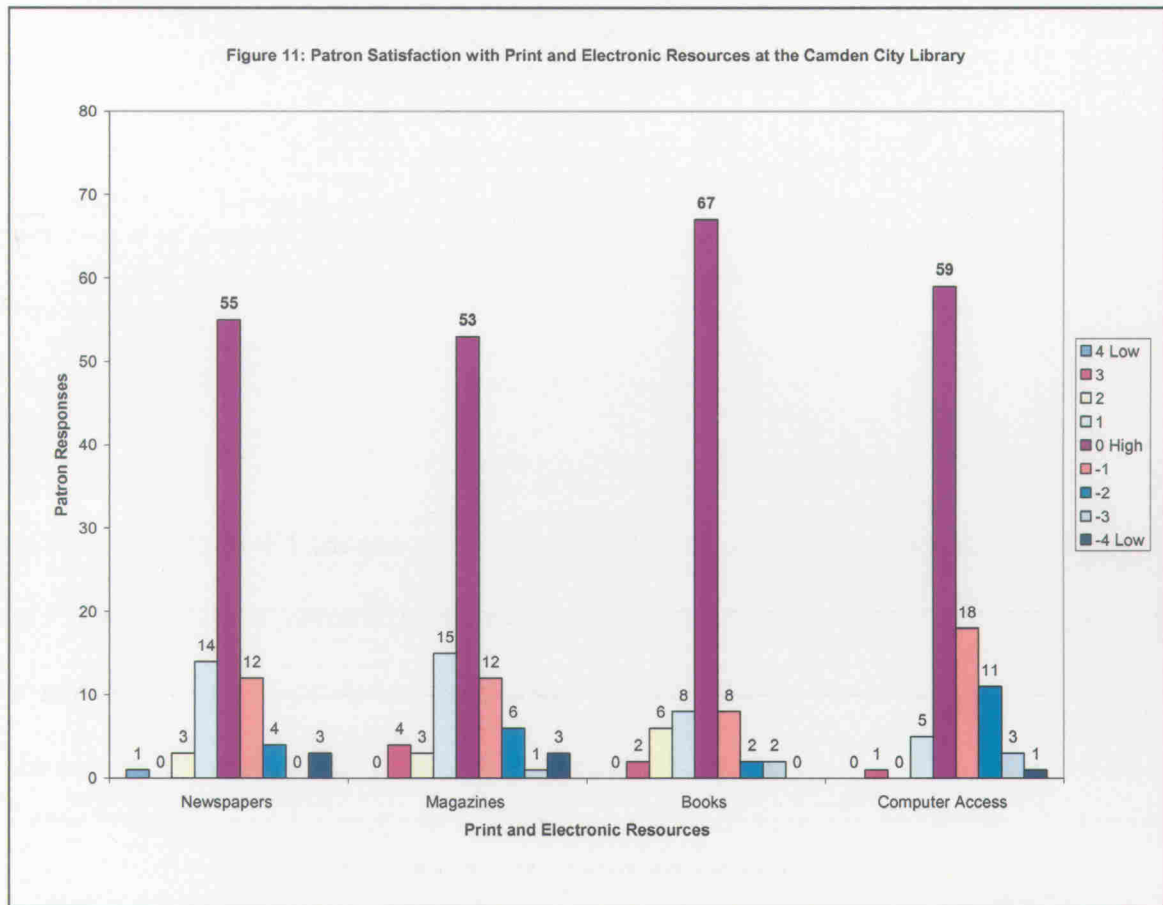
Library Services at the Camden City Library

*Present Level of Library Services*. The following areas of service fall under the heading of library service: Events and Programming, Telephone Reference, Knowledgeable Staff and the ability find information on ones own. Fifty-six patrons rated the staff of the library a 5; twenty-five rated the service a 4; twenty-one scored the level of service 3; eight patrons scored the service a 2 and three patrons either scored the

service a 1 or did not evaluate it. Finding Information received a score of 5 from fifty-

five patrons; twenty-three patrons ranked the present level of service a 4; thirteen patrons

scored the level of service a 3; three patrons scored the service a 2 or lower and six

respondents did not evaluate the service. Thirty-four patrons scored the library's

telephone reference service a 5; sixteen patrons scored the service a 4; thirty-one patrons

rated the service 3; eight patrons rated the service 2; to two patrons who scored the

service a 1 and twelve patrons did not evaluate the area of service. Events and

Programming received a score of 5 from thirty-two patrons; twenty-seven patrons rated

the service a 4; twenty patrons scored the present level of service a 3; eleven patrons

rated the service a 2; five patrons scored the area of service a 1 and eight failed to

evaluate the service.

Figure 12: Present Level of Library Services at the Camden City Library
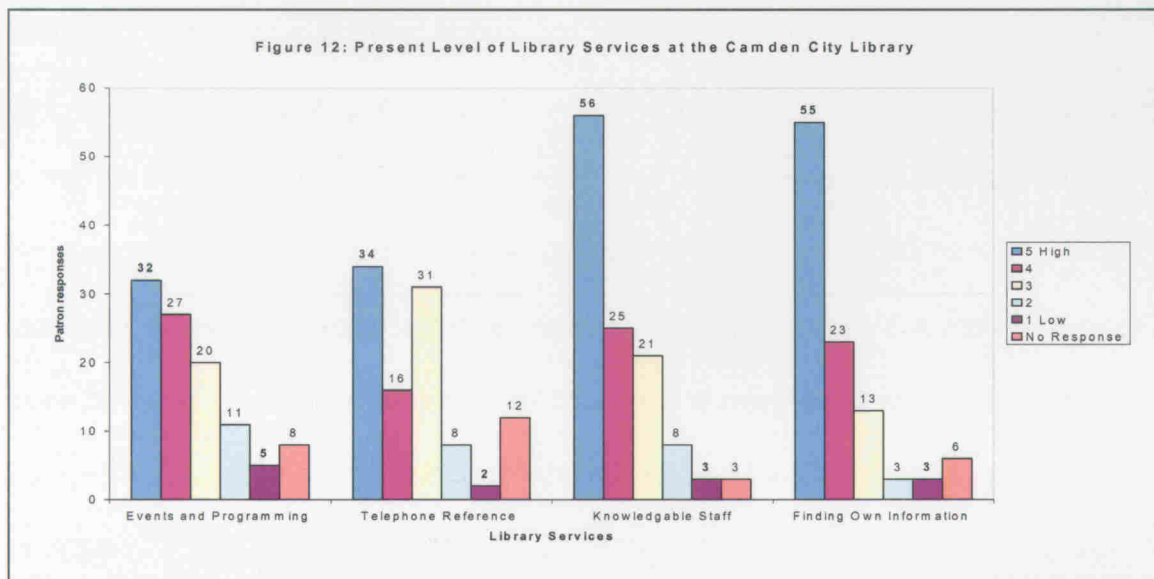
Importance of Library Services. (see Figure 13). Eighty patrons rated the ability to

find information on ones own a 5; ten scored the service a 4 in importance; five rated the

service a 3; one patron scored the importance a 2 and six patrons failed to answer this

question. Seventy-three patrons scored having a Knowledgeable Staff a 5 in importance;

fifteen rated the service a 4; eight ranked the service a 3 in importance; three patrons scored the service a 2; one patron scored the service a 1 and three patrons did not answer the question. Forty-six patrons scored the importance of Telephone Reference a 5; fifteen rated the service a 4 in importance; sixteen scored the service a 3; five ranked the service a 2; nine patrons scored the service a 1 in importance and twelve did not answer the question. Forty-three patrons scored the importance of Events and Programming a 5; twenty-one scored the service a 4; twenty patrons scored the importance of the service a 3; seven patrons rated the service a 2 and the service received a score of 1 from four patrons and eight did not evaluate the service.

Figure 13: Importance of Library Services at the Camden City Library
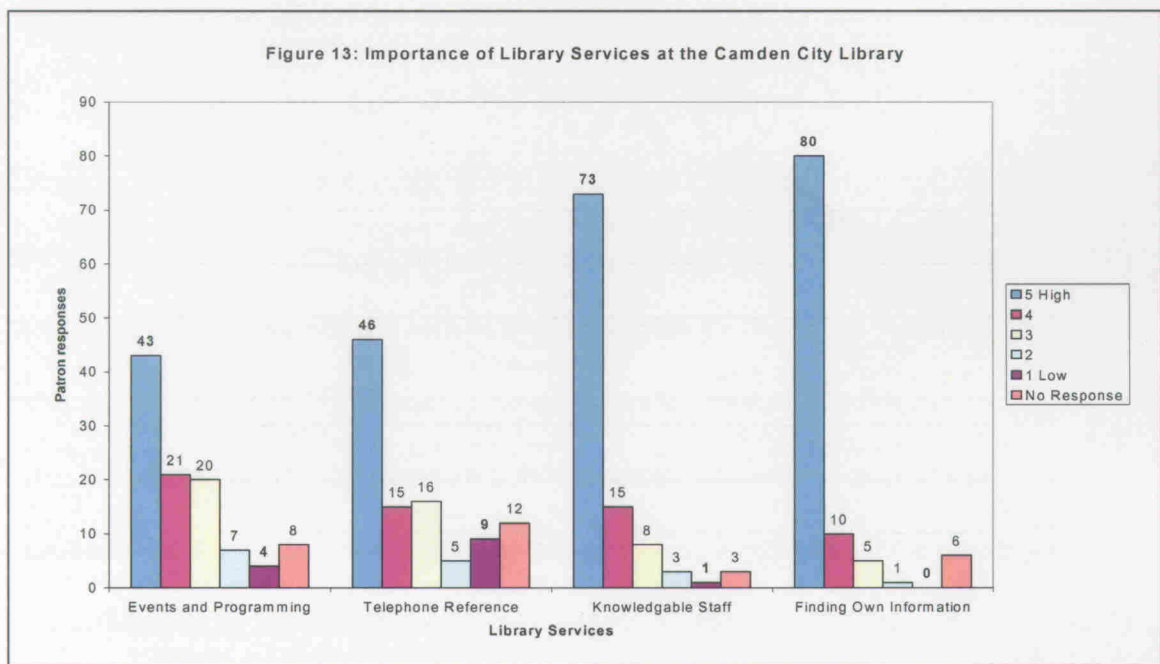
Satisfaction with Library Services. (see Figure 14). The library staff received a satisfaction score of 0 from seventy-one patrons; twenty patrons scored the service a 1 or -1; five patrons scored the service a 2 or -2; four patrons scored the service a 3 or -3 and three patrons did not answer the question. Sixty-nine patrons ranked their ability to find the information that they needed a 0; fifteen scored the service a 1 or -1; seven scored the

service a 2 or -2; two patrons scored the service a 3 or -3; three patrons rated the service a 4 or -4 and only six patrons did not evaluate the service. Telephone service received a satisfaction score of 0 from fifty-seven patrons; twenty-two patrons scored the services a 1 or -1; eight scored the service a 2 or -2; four scored the service a 3 or -3 and twelve patrons did not evaluate the service. Fifty-five patrons gave events and programming a satisfaction score of 0; twenty-six rated the service a 1 or -1; ten scored the service a 2 or -2; two patrons scored the service a 3 or -3; two patrons scored the service a 4 or -4 and eight patrons did not evaluate the service.

Figure 14: Patron Satisfaction with Library Services at the Camden City Library
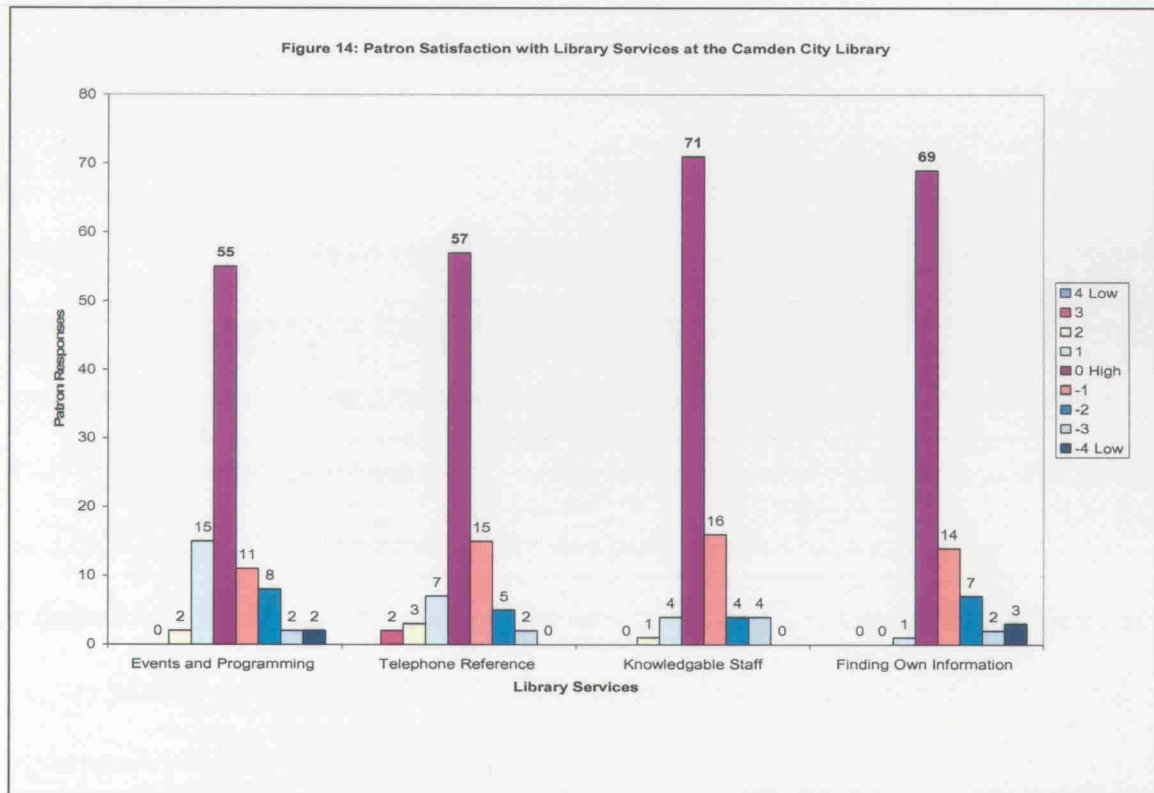
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine how adult patrons were using the

Federal Street branch of the Camden City Free Public Library. Additionally, the study

measured patron satisfaction with twelve services that the library was providing.

Conclusion

Indeed, the results presented in the previous chapter indicated a high pattern of

use. According to Figure 5 in the previous chapter, 27% of the respondents reported using

the library for Computer Access. However, an additional 27% cited multiple reasons for

their visits to the library. In fact, 67% of the patrons surveyed indicated that they visited

the library at least once a week. While the evidence presented in the previous chapter

proves that adults are indeed using the library, the primary concern of this study was the

satisfaction of the patrons. This study was designed to measure patron satisfaction by

having patrons evaluate the present level and the importance of twelve services provided

by the library. The services themselves were divided into three major areas: information

services, print and electronic resources and library services.

Information services at the Camden City Library. Information Services consisted

of Health, Legal, Social Services and Education Information. According to the findings

presented in the previous chapter, patrons were satisfied the most with the present level

of Education Information available. This service was the only one in this area to receive a

score of 5 or more from more than fifty patrons. Patrons were least satisfied with the present level of legal information available. According to Figure 7 in the previous chapter Education Information dominated in importance while Legal information scored the lowest in overall importance. Evidence provided in Figure 8 demonstrated that patrons were indeed satisfied with library's ability to provide Education Information and Legal information received the lowest overall satisfaction score. The low scores of legal information can be attributed to the fact that either patrons were genuinely dissatisfied with service or they do not utilize the service thus they did not evaluate it. It is important to note the Legal information had the highest rate of no response when compared to other services in this area. Overall, as a whole, the evidence presented in the previous chapter indicated that patrons were satisfied with Information services at the Camden City Library.

Print and Electronic Resources at the Camden City Library. The following areas of service fell under the heading of Print and Electronic Sources: Newspapers, Magazines, Books and Computer Access. According to Figure 9 in Chapter 4 of the four services in this area patrons were most pleased the library's Computer Access which received the highest present level of service evaluation. Patrons were least pleased with the present level of Magazine resources that the library provided. It received the lowest scores. In fact six patrons rated the present level of service a 1. Patrons were not only pleased with the present level of Computer Access but ranked the service as highest in importance when compared to the other services in the same area. According to Figure10 in the previous chapter seventy-seven patrons scored the service a 5 in importance. Interestingly, Books not Magazine service received the lowest importance score when

compared to the other services in this area. According to Figure 10 only forty-two patrons viewed Books as being important. However, the patrons' responses changed when the focus shifted to overall satisfaction with Print and Electronic resources. According to Figure 11 services ranked in order of satisfaction: Books, Computer Access, Newspapers and Magazines. Figure 11 clearly shows that patrons were satisfied with level of Books the library provides; while Magazines services did receive a positive ranking with fifty-three patrons being satisfied it still placed last in overall satisfaction. The evidence presented in Chapter 4 proves that most patrons are indeed satisfied with the Print and Electronic resources at the Camden City Library.

Library Services at the Camden City Library. The following areas of service fall under the heading of library service: Events and Programming, Telephone Reference, Knowledgeable Staff and the ability find information on one's own. According to Figure 12 both the library's knowledgeable staff and the ability to find information on one's own ranked highest in terms of the present level of service. In fact the difference between two services was one patron. However, the library's Events and Programming received the lowest score in terms of present level of service. According to Figure 13 the patrons' idea of importance changed very slightly with ability to find information on one's own and a knowledgeable staff still remaining in the top position. Events and Programming once again was rated last when compared to the other services in this area. In overall satisfaction every service received a score of zero from at least fifty patrons. This was the only service area to accomplish this feat. According to Figure 14 patrons ranked the services in the following order: Knowledgeable Staff, Ability to Find Information on ones own, Telephone reference and Events and Programming. Patrons were most

satisfied with the library staff and their ability to find their own information. Once again Events and Programming placed last in overall satisfaction when compared to the service areas. The low scores of Events and Programming can be attributed to the fact that either patrons were genuinely dissatisfied with service or they do not utilize the service thus they did not evaluate it.

Recommendations

While the purpose of this study focused on adult patrons it is important to note that adults alone do not incorporate the total library use population. Additional study is required in order to chart the use and satisfaction of both children and young adults. Further studies are needed to address how often patrons actually uses the services that they are asked to evaluate. It would be interesting to discover what services, if any, patrons believe need to be added to the library. While this study discovered that there was a high level of Computer Use it did not determine the extent of the use.

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Appendix

How Do You Like Your Library?

In this survey you are being asked to evaluate the services that your library currently provides. You are also being asked how important each of these services is to you. Please circle a number between 1-5 with one being the lowest and five being the highest.

My library is a good source for:	Present Service					Importance to me				
	low				high	low				high
1. Health information	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Legal information	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Social services information	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Education information	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Area newspapers	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Journals and magazines	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. General interest books	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Computer access	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Events and programming	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. Telephone reference	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. Knowledgeable staff	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12. Finding the information I need	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

About You

Sex   Male   Female

Age group please circle the group to which you belong:

| 18-19 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 | 80-89 | 90-99 | 100 |

My highest level of education is

| Some High School | High School Graduate | Some College | College Graduate | Some Graduate | Graduate Degree |

On average, I use the library

| Everyday | Several times per week | Once per week | Once per month | Once per year |

I come to the library primarily for: Circle one

| Research | Computers | Fun | Reference | Movies | Music | Programs | To study | Books | Work |

Thank you very much for your time!!!

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