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THE PUBLIC LIBRARIAN'S ROLE IN
TEACHING INFORMATION LITERACY

by
Elizabeth A. Battelini

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by

Assistant Professor

Date Approved

July 8, 2002

ABSTRACT

Elizabeth A. Battelini
THE PUBLIC LIBRARIAN'S ROLE IN TEACHING INFORMATION
LITERACY
2001/2002

Dr. Holly Willett
Master of Arts in School and Public Librarianship

To determine the public librarian's role in teaching information literacy, this study was designed to evaluate library skills of the adult population in Cumberland County, New Jersey. Two separate surveys consisting of matrix and open-ended questions were sent to reference librarians employed in public libraries within the county and to 380 adult residents. Ten out of 18 librarians participated. One hundred and eighty-five resident surveys were returned. Sixty-seven participants were library users.

The research revealed there is a need for library instruction but patrons may not be interested in attending formal instruction at their public libraries. Twenty-one percent of adults surveyed stated they would attend classes, 48% stated they would not attend, and 31% were not sure. The librarians believed that instruction on utilizing all the resources found within the library would benefit their patrons; however, librarians responded that most patrons would not attend classes. Fifty percent of the librarians surveyed believed that patrons would not participate in formal instruction, 40% were undecided, and 10% did not respond to the question.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Elizabeth A. Battelini

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2001/2002

Dr. Holly Willett

Master of Arts Degree in School and Public Librarianship

In an effort to determine the public librarian's role in teaching information literacy, reference librarians and adult residents in Cumberland County, New Jersey, were surveyed. Among the group studied, librarians believed most adults would benefit from library instruction, but many participants were not receptive to formal instruction at public libraries.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter One

The Problem

Introduction and Background

In recent years, technology has drastically changed the way individuals access and retrieve information. The introduction of OPAC, the Internet, and other electronic resources have made the term “information literacy” a relevant new concept within the library community. With the emergence of computer technology, library users must develop and acquire the new skills needed to utilize these resources.

Public libraries have always been information centers offering free access to information to library users. In order for library patrons to have full access to information, they must learn to locate and evaluate the information they find. If adult patrons do not possess the necessary skills to accomplish this task, where do they receive the education to become information literate?

The public library is a likely choice to offer library orientation and information literacy instruction through adult education classes. Since librarians are dedicated to lifelong learning, adult education is one way for librarians to demonstrate their commitment. According to *Modern Practice of Adult Education* by Knowles, adult education is successful if the following three sets of needs and goals are met:

- ▶ the needs and goals of the individual
- ▶ the needs and goals of the institution
- ▶ the needs and goals of society (Knowles, 1970).

Statement of Problem

Information literacy is multifaceted. Besides learning how to use electronic equipment and resources, users must also develop search strategies to locate and evaluate material. Information must be accurate and relevant to the search. Adult patrons, especially those who have been out of school for long periods of time, may not have the training needed to function as information literate individuals. If adults are lacking information literacy skills, they are being denied full access to information. Public libraries may rectify this problem by offering information literacy instruction.

Before a program can be implemented, a need for information literacy instruction must first be determined. Two surveys were disseminated in Cumberland County, New Jersey. One survey was distributed to reference librarians employed in public libraries. The purpose of this survey was to study the librarians' perceptions of adult library skills to determine if information literacy programs are needed. A second survey was distributed to adult residents over the age of eighteen. The purpose of the second survey was to determine how residents view their library skills and if they desire library skills instruction. Surveys were used to reach a large variety of people with different skills and abilities. To determine the need for instruction, survey results between the two groups were collected, analyzed, and compared.

Once a need has been determined, what type of instruction do residents desire? Kim Crowley discusses the phrase "public library service responses" in her article "Information Literacy in the Public Library." "Public library response is what a library does for, or offers to, the public in an effort to meet specific community needs....Public

library responses represent the gathering and deployment of critical resources to produce a specific public benefit or result” (Crowley, 1998). These surveys were distributed and analyzed to determine Cumberland County’s public library service response for information literacy.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to determine if information literacy classes were needed and desired by residents of Cumberland County, New Jersey. If literacy classes were needed, the goal was to determine the type of instruction desired by adult learners and how the public librarian might fulfill this need.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The need for information literacy appears to be universal. Positive results have been found for information literacy programs at the Toronto Public Library, the Bachelor Institute in Australia, the Fort Collins Library in Colorado, and the Science, Industry, and Business Library at the New York Public Library. These programs are not formal studies. They are classes taught by librarians. The topics range from basic library orientation classes to utilizing the print and electronic resources within the library.

The Toronto Public Library serves a diverse population consisting of immigrants from over 169 countries. Because a large number of these people have limited English language skills, the staff at the Toronto Public Library incorporated library orientation and information literacy classes into their multicultural services. Participants in the English as a Second Language program began enrolling in Internet and library orientation

classes once they realized the library facility had resources that would help them improve their reading and computer skills (Lavery & Livingston, 1999).

The same type of results was found at the Bachelor Institute in Australia. This institution educates the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from remote regions in Australia. These people had very little formal education and no exposure to library facilities. The staff had to develop teaching strategies and services that showed respect for the people's different cultures. The library staff conducted workshops explaining the library's layout, services, and resources. In the Aboriginal culture, knowledge and information is passed down through oral tradition. Once the workshops were conducted, the students began to relate the library to elders in their community that passed down their oral traditions. Once this rapport between the staff and the community was established, the community was receptive to library services (Anderson, 1999).

In Colorado, the Fort Collins Library started a successful information literacy campaign that was welcomed by the community. It started with the library adopting the Public Library Association's *Planning for Results: A Public Library Transformation Process*. This document lists thirteen public service responses including information literacy.

The Fort Collins Library adopted information literacy as a service response. They began their program by creating a series of lessons called Technology Talks. The program started with two public Internet stations. This program was the result of patrons asking for assistance on accessing the Internet. The program expanded to four classes. These classes were Introduction to the Internet, Business Resources on the World Wide Web, How to

search the World Wide Web, and Children's Sites on the World Wide Web. Initially, attendance ranged from fifteen to twenty people.

Patrons then began asking for instruction on utilizing the library's OPAC system. Classes labeled Beginning Pac were created. Patrons were even taught how to access the University of Colorado's online catalog. In 1998, the information literacy program expanded to sixteen Technology Talk classes, thirty-two Pac Training sessions, and twenty Electronic Literacy Connection classes (Crowley, 1998).

The Science, Industry, and Business Library at the New York Public Library is the largest public information center in the world dedicated to science and business information. Librarians conduct eighteen different information literacy classes for the general public. There are classes that teach basic library orientation, Web searching, and the use of a variety of electronic and print resources dedicated to science and business. Participants are taught to find information and how to evaluate information they find. These classes are in demand and they are held each day. Since May 1996, over 31,000 people have registered for these classes (Thornton, 1999).

Although these four institutions deal with different types of people with various levels of education and income, the basic need for classes are the same. People need and want information that helps them to function and advance in their daily lives. These programs support the criteria stated by Knowles concerning the success of adult education. First, the needs of individuals concerning information literacy were established. Since libraries are lifelong learning institutions, offering information instruction is consistent with the goals of these institutions. As technology becomes more important in

society, a need for greater skills is created. By offering information instruction, the goals of individuals, the library institutions, and society are met.

Definitions

Before information literacy programs are integrated into the public library, the term must be defined and understood. The American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy states, "To be information literate a person must be able to locate, evaluate," and use effectively the needed information" (American Library Association, 1989). Plotnick elaborates this definition further in Information Literacy by stating, "Since information may be presented in a number of formats, the term "information" applies to more than just the printed words. Other literacies such as visual, media, computer network, and basic literacies are implicit in information literacy" (Plotnick, 1999, p.1). The following terminology is also included in this research paper:

pedagogy - the science or art of teaching, usually referring to children

andragogy - the art or science of teaching adults

self-directed learning - a teaching method that allows the learner's input and collaboration into what is being taught

teacher-directed learning - a teaching method that gives the teacher total control over what and how material is taught

adult learners - in this study participants in educational services over the age of eighteen.

Hypothesis or questions to be answered

This research attempted to answer three questions. First, is there a need for adult information instruction in Cumberland County, New Jersey? Do adults lack the skills needed to locate and evaluate information? Secondly, if there is a need for these classes, what type of instruction do residents desire? Lastly, once these needs are determined, how will the public librarian fulfill the need for instruction?

Organization of the remainder of the study

The remainder of this research paper is broken down into the following four chapters. Each chapter explains different phases of the research process. The final results are analyzed and presented to the reader.

Chapter Two: Literature review. Material that supports the purpose of this research is presented. The literature review contains a brief introduction of information literacy and explains the historical context of information literacy and adult education in public libraries.

Chapter Three: The methodology. The selected methodology and the design of the study are discussed. This includes a description of the target audience, the size of the population, and the size of the sample. Two surveys were designed and distributed. This chapter also includes information on how data is collected and analyzed.

Chapter Four: Findings. The results of the study are presented. Graphics include charts and tables to compare the different percentages of needs and opinions between adult residents and reference librarians within Cumberland County.

Chapter Five: Summary. This chapter summarizes the research findings and makes recommendations for future studies needed to establish programs concerning information literacy programs in public libraries within Cumberland County.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

As advances in technology are made, how is the public librarian's role in the library community affected? Do public libraries have a part in building a society rich in information literacy? Literature supports the view that public libraries should and do contribute to developing the information skills of the adult population. Former ALA President, Nancy Kranich, in "Building Information Smart Communities" describes librarians as being information smart and techno-savvy. They recognize the importance of new information technology and make it available to the public (Kranich, 2000).

Would the general public participate in information literacy classes taught at their local library? Across the country, Internet classes are frequently taught at library facilities for the adult learner; however, information literacy encompasses more than just the Internet. Would adult learners attend library orientation classes that explain the variety of resources and information available at the library? Research supports the view that adults do and will participate in these classes if the material pertains to their daily lives.

Historical Context

Adult education is increasing and there are several reasons for this growth. First, it must be remembered that adults continue to grow and change throughout their lives.

Adult education gives adults the skills and information needed to adapt to these changes. Secondly, there is a higher demand for job retraining because of technological advancements. These changes have eliminated certain positions and changed the skills needed for employment. Lastly, there is a greater number of adults in the total population due to increased longevity. This results in a greater demand for professional training (Imel, 1988).

Adult education in the public library is not a new concept. The American Library Association was founded in 1876 and became active in promoting adult literacy services. As immigrants came to America, public libraries quickly became centers for teaching adults English. At the end of the nineteenth century, librarians at the American Library Association conference were debating on the public librarian's role for teaching adult literacy (DeCandido, 2001).

In 1924, the Carnegie Corporation of New York held its first conference on the issue of adult education and began awarding millions of dollars in grant money for adult education in public libraries (Monroe, 1963). Libraries became a center for providing information to the public. Adult services expanded and became available to individuals and community organizations.

According to the Library Bill of Rights, individuals are entitled to open access of information regardless of race, sex, religion, or economic status. If individuals are unable to read, they have little access to information. In order to accommodate the disadvantaged and preserve their rights to information, the American Library Association founded the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services. This organization is mainly concerned with

adult literacy problems in underserved populations. It works to build programs within public libraries that promote family literacy by helping parents and children read.

Underserved populations include new and non-readers, people geographically isolated, people with disabilities, rural and urban poor people, and people who are discriminated against because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, language, and social class (DeCandido, 2001).

Although funding is limited, grants and donations have continued to support adult literacy programs. In 1995, The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund sponsored a three year four million dollar national campaign to improve adult literacy programs in public libraries. The project was called Literacy in Libraries Across America. This campaign awarded funding to the best existing literacy programs in public libraries. Also in 1995, the ALA adopted Goal 2000. This is a five year plan that stresses the importance of connecting public libraries to digital information networks (DeCandido, 2001). Once limited to the printed word, adult literacy is slowly expanding to include the need for overall information skills. Public libraries realized that without developing new skills to utilize electronic formats, people will not have full access to information. Limited access to information means limited opportunities for individuals. Limited opportunities have an adverse affect on people's lives by denying them the ability to progress in society.

Poustie in "Educating for Information Literacy through the Internet: Another Role of the Public Library" advocates technology training for library staff. Since the public library has always had a place in education, libraries need to provide patrons with access to training so they can use information technology. Librarians must now

supplement the printed word with electronic resources. In order to do this, librarians must become trainers to teach patrons to access a wider range of information. According to Poustie, public librarians must not only provide access to networked information but also teach patrons how to get the most value from it. This means recognizing the need for information, identifying, locating, accessing, evaluating, and applying the needed information. The public library is a catalyst for lifelong learning and a training agency where people learn to access new technology (Poustie, 1999).

Academic as well as public libraries also serve the adult population. Many libraries at two-year institutions are opened to the public. As computer technology expands and information becomes digitalized, these institutions are also becoming concerned with information literacy skills.

One example, is the tribal community colleges serving Native Americans. There are 24 tribal-controlled community colleges located in the United States. Besides preserving their native cultures, these libraries provide many services for their communities. Many employers on reservations send their staff to the library for computer instruction. Also, Indian businesses on reservations rely heavily upon grants for survival. Business owners need access to information concerning business contracts and grant money. The community college library is one place where people go for this information. Many of the college presidents interviewed agreed that the library's role is a proactive one not limited to the storage of books or waiting for patrons to make requests. They viewed the library as an information center and the librarian as a catalyst in both providing information and in anticipating the need for it (Metoyer-Duran, 1992).

Assess previous studies

Although the programs previously mentioned are not studies, the success of the adult information literacy classes in Australia, Toronto, New York, and Colorado show that there is a need for individuals to have access to information that is relevant to their lives. Imel, in "Guidelines for Working with Adult Learners," states "Adult learning is usually motivated by need to acquire a new skill or make a decision. When adults perceive a need to learn something, they are generally capable of working very hard. Since most adult learning is voluntary, adults also have the prerogative of dropping out of programs that do not meet their needs. Adults are often time conscious learners. . . Therefore, most want to meet their educational goals as directly, quickly, and efficiently as possible" (Imel, 1988).

This explains why the information literacy programs in New York, Colorado, and Toronto have met with such success. The librarians developed programs that responded to the needs of the community. People within these communities desired certain type of information instruction. In response to this demand, librarians developed programs combining theory with hands-on instruction. Participants learned how to develop search strategies and then practiced searching for information.

In New York, people wanted to learn how to use and search the Internet for business and science information. Participants also wanted to learn how to use print and electronic resources that are dedicated to employment, business, science, and government issues. In order to use these resources effectively, librarians developed classes that taught patrons how to use resources, develop search strategies, and evaluate information.

In Fort Collins, Colorado, patrons wanted to improve their Internet and computer skills. Patrons expressed their desire for Internet and computer instruction. This included accessing and searching the library's online catalog. Librarians responded to the community's requests and initiated Internet and OPAC instruction.

The Toronto Public Library expanded their multicultural services by including information literacy for English as second language users. These patrons needed to improve their reading and computer skills. They realized learning about print and electronic resources within the library would help them locate materials that improve these skills; therefore, information literacy helps them achieve their goals. As a result, people enrolled in library orientation and Internet classes.

In each case, the instruction was the library's response to community needs. These programs became a part of library services in these communities because people expressed an interest. Information skills and instruction may differ according to the community, but the goal of teaching information literacy is the same. Individuals must acquire skills to locate and evaluate information relevant to their lives in order to function as well-informed members of society.

In Australia, report results showed the majority of Australians surveyed stated they would automatically use the library as a source of information if they wanted to find something out and that a major role of the library was in education and lifelong learning. The survey included users and non-library users (Poustie, 1999).

According to the literature, enrollment in these classes is increasing. If people were not interested, enrollment would drop and these services would discontinue.

However, there are certain limitations to these programs. There is no evidence that classes increase library use for extended periods of time. Also, there has been no assessment to determine if these classes make participants independent library users. Individuals may continue to rely on the librarian's help when trying to locate information or participants may need extended instruction to fully understand the resources and how to evaluate information.

Justify selection of the topic

Due to the demand, information literacy classes are growing in number across the country. If the need for instruction exists in Cumberland County among adult users, it is the responsibility of library staff to make sure information is accessible to the community. Instruction trains individuals to become information literate and this helps to guarantee the flow and access of information to the public. By completing these surveys, Cumberland County residents indicated their preferences for instruction.

Research design and methodology

In *Opening Doors for Adult New Readers*, Bayley advocates distributing informal surveys to both the user and non-library user to determine the wants and needs of the community (Bayley, 1990). Knowles also states that needs must be discovered before they can be met. The technique used to discover the educational needs of the public is called a community survey (Knowles, 1970).

A community survey was distributed to approximately 380 state and municipal employees who work and reside in Cumberland County, New Jersey. Cumberland County

is located in southern New Jersey and consists of twenty communities. State and municipal workers were targeted because they represent a wide range of skills, education, and income levels within the county. Since reference librarians have direct contact with patrons on a daily basis, a separate survey was distributed to reference librarians. Their response is beneficial because they are familiar with patron behavior. Do they think instruction would benefit their community?

The surveys were hand delivered to state, municipal, and county employees. Once completed, they were collected at a designated time. Surveys were also hand delivered to the four public libraries within Cumberland County. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included so the librarians could mail surveys back to the researcher's post office box.

Theoretical Framework

What is the most effective way to teach adults? Unlike the traditional theorists that support pedagogy as teacher-directed learning, Knowles' andragogical model favors the self-directed learning theory. Although his theory is controversial, his andragogical model supports learners as partners in the learning experience. It is self-directed learning because the learner takes responsibility for what and how material is taught. His model is based on the following assumptions: self concept, experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learn (Knowles, 1970).

Self Concept. During childhood, an individual's needs are met by other people. A child is totally dependent and must rely on others for survival. A child's role at home and in school is defined as a learner. Adults choose what children will learn. As children grow

and mature, they begin making their own decisions. They grow into independent thinkers. Finally, as adults we are self-directing because we make our own decisions and manage our own lives. Self concept is a growth process where individuals evolve from dependent children to independent adults.

Experience. As individuals grow and mature they accumulate experiences which may serve as a resource for learning. Adults have different types of experiences that may affect how they learn and what they choose to learn. Adults may also learn from other people's experiences. Workshops and networking are examples of group learning experiences.

Readiness to learn. There are things that individuals must learn in a certain order to advance from one stage of development to the next stage. These learning experiences are called developmental tasks. These developmental tasks create a readiness to learn and at certain points teachable moments. As adults, individuals learn tasks that are relative to their social roles. Social roles may include a spouse, parent, boss, or employee.

Orientation to learn. Children acquire knowledge in school that should help them later in life. In primary grades, the curriculum should prepare them for high school. The skills acquired in high school should help them succeed in college. This process is called subject-centered learning. Adults tend to engage in educational activities that immediately benefit their personal or professional lives. This is a problem-centered approach to learning. Adults will respond better to learning if the curriculum is relevant to their daily needs. The adult learning process is internal. It is done to reach a goal that is relevant to the individual's life (Knowles, 1970).

Although Knowles was not the founder of self-directed learning, he was the first to make this concept popular in the early 1970s. There are factors, however, that may affect self-directed learning. There are times when adults lack the skills, the confidence, or commitment to learn. Therefore, instruction may need a combination of direction and support by the teacher (Imel, 1994). Teachers and librarians must also be aware of individual differences. Information literacy in Australia was successful only after an awareness and respect for the Aboriginal culture was established.

Adults participating in educational activities are showing self-directed motivation. Their actions are guided by the need to know and apply information to their lives. Imel's view on adult learning supports the criteria set forth in Knowles's androgogical model.

Adults will learn if instruction meets the following conditions:

- ▶ It combines theory and practice by using learning strategies that combine previous knowledge with new information
- ▶ It is sensitive to individual differences
- ▶ It adopts curriculum that is culturally relevant
- ▶ It uses instructional strategies that allow learners to develop relationships with other participants such as group activities (Imel, 2001).

Summary

Since adult education in public libraries is not a new concept, it seems logical that librarians will be at the forefront of teaching new information skills to the adult community. Literature supports the view that information literacy is desired by adults, and librarians have the capability to teach these skills. Although there has been no assessment concerning information literacy instruction, classes in different cities and countries are popular with the adult community. Literature also supports the view that adults can and

will learn if instruction is relevant to issues in their daily lives, they are active participants in the learning process, and the material is presented in a comfortable and nonthreatening environment.

Chapter Three

The Methodology

Introduction - review of study's purpose

The purpose of this research was two fold. First, the adult need for information instruction in Cumberland County must be determined. Secondly, if instruction is needed, how does the public librarian fulfill this need and promote information literacy? The literature review indicated that public libraries are beginning to incorporate information literacy programs into their adult services. Should public librarians within Cumberland County make information literacy a part of their public service response? The result of this research should help to determine the answer.

Description of methodology

Surveys were the choice of methodology for this study. The researcher designed two separate color-coded questionnaires. One questionnaire was designed for reference librarians and the second was designed for state, county, and municipal employees who work and reside in Cumberland County. Survey methodology was chosen for the following reasons. First, participants may complete surveys at their convenience. People are more apt to participate if you do not infringe upon their time. If people are approached at an inconvenient time, they are more likely to refuse your request. Secondly, surveys provide structured responses so participants do not stray from the topic; however, surveys should contain enough in-depth questions to properly cover the subject matter being

researched. Lastly, participation is strictly anonymous. By delivering these surveys to places of employment, the researcher had no idea who chose to participate in the study. Although a coded record of the number of surveys distributed to each building was kept, the researcher did not have a permanent record of respondents' names, addresses, or telephone numbers. Although some individuals do not mind providing personal information, some people wish to remain anonymous.

Design of the study

The surveys were brief in design. They combined open-ended and closed-ended questions. Each survey also contained matrix questions. The questions were similar so responses between the librarians and residents could be compared. A comment or suggestion question was included in each survey so participants could state their own thoughts and ideas. In order to keep surveys separate, the surveys were color coded. Librarians' surveys were pink and adult surveys were blue.

The surveys were brief for two reasons. First, the surveys were distributed at the participants' workplaces. One cannot expect people to answer lengthy questions that would interfere with their duties. Secondly, long surveys can be boring or frustrating for participants answering questions. The surveys were as thorough as possible without infringing upon the participants' time or privacy.

Librarians were asked what services patrons use most frequently and what types of instruction would benefit their patrons. Librarians were asked to rate the library skills of their patrons and if they thought patrons would participate in library classes. Residents

were asked to rate their own overall library and computer skills. They then were asked what services they use and whether they would enroll in formal library instruction.

Sample and population

Cumberland County is located in southern New Jersey consisting of 2,000 square miles. It has an urban and rural population. Metropolitan areas are Vineland, Millville, and Bridgeton. Economics depend largely upon agricultural services and businesses, manufacturing, and retail sales. In 1990, Cumberland County was home to 9,901 college graduates. In 2000, the estimated population was 146,000 people (Cumberland County, n.d.). In order to ensure a proper representation of the population, 380 adults were sampled.

Before conducting the surveys in Cumberland County, a pretest was performed on a similar population. Two reference librarians and three municipal employees were surveyed. The three municipal employees were Cumberland County residents but were employed in out-of-county municipal positions. Two of the three were library users. The reference librarians surveyed were from an out-of-county library. The pretest was performed to any determine any weaknesses in the surveys. The researcher did not receive any negative feedback or suggestions to improve the surveys.

The first survey was distributed to the four public libraries located within the county. The libraries included in this study were the Cumberland County Public Library, the Vineland Public Library, the Bridgeton Public Library, and the Millville Public Library.

In order to cover a wide variety of positions and income levels, the surveys were

distributed to residents employed in civil service positions. Non-library users and out of county residents were not included in this survey.

Instrumentation

The surveys which were distributed to reference librarians were meant to determine patron behavior concerning information literacy. Librarians interact with patrons on a daily basis and become familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of their patrons. The survey contained certain demographic questions concerning age and library use. To determine if librarians see a pattern of behavior among certain age groups, they were asked if certain groups require more assistance. This was not to suggest that one factor alone increases the need for library instruction. There may be a combination of factors that contribute to this need. By comparing the survey results from the librarians and the adult residents, it was hoped to determine which factors contribute to the need for information literacy programs within the community.

Before surveys were delivered to the libraries, the exact number of librarians at each institution was determined. Each survey was coded by a number and a certain set of numbers were assigned to each library. As surveys were returned, the researcher checked the numbers to determine which set of librarians returned the surveys. Since participation was voluntary, a librarian may have chosen to not be included in this research. Although coding determined the total number of surveys received back from each library, it did not determine which individuals participated in the research.

The second survey distributed to adults was also coded. Like surveys designed for the public librarians, a set of numbers was designated for each workplace. This allowed the researcher to keep track of the surveys returned from each building.

The survey distributed to state, county, and municipal employees contained demographic questions concerning age and occupation. Occupation may give some indication of income. Does education, age, or income level play a part in the need for information literacy? If these factors contributed to this need, libraries might be able to design programs that will accommodate these individuals. By asking the residents what type of instruction or classes they prefer, librarians may have a better idea of what the community needs and wants.

Data Collection

Data collection was a very simple procedure. A ten-day return period was allowed for librarians. Attached to their surveys was a self addressed stamped envelope. Written instructions asked librarians to return surveys to the researcher's post office box within the ten days. The same time frame was given to Cumberland County residents; however, the researcher personally picked up these surveys at a designated time.

Data Analysis

After a ten-day return period, the material was sorted and analyzed. From the research, a determination was made concerning which services are used by the public and which services the librarians think benefit their community. This study should help reveal whether the need for information instruction exists and whether individuals will participate

in formal library instruction at public libraries. Separate databases constructed in Excel recorded qualitative data from each librarian and each county resident. Descriptive statistics presented in figures and tables showed and compared the answers between each group in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Survey return rates

The return rate for adult surveys was 49%. Out of the 380 surveys distributed, 185 surveys were returned. The majority of participants were non-library users. There were 105 non-library users, 67 library users, and 13 out-of-county residents. Non-library users and non-residents were not included in the survey results.

Surveys were distributed to 18 certified librarians in Cumberland County. Of the 18 librarians surveyed, 10 librarians participated. Therefore, the librarians' survey return rate was 56%.

Adult Surveys

From a list, adults were asked to check all the services they use at their public library. Borrowing books and other materials from the library's collection was the number one service chosen. Reference service was the second most common answer and Internet use was the third. Although librarians believed that word processing instruction would be a beneficial service, word processing, adult classes, and databases were among the least chosen services. See Table 1 for a breakdown of choices. The results total more than 67 responses because participants were allowed to pick more than one service from the list. If participants did not find their choices on the list, participants could choose other and write in their own responses. No participants chose other.

Table 1
Adult Choices for Most Used Services

Services	N	%
Borrowing services	48	72
Reference and other material	27	40
Ask the librarian for assistance	21	21
Internet	21	31
Children's services	17	25
Read newspapers and magazines	13	19
Databases	7	10
Public functions	6	9
Word processing	4	7
Adult classes	3	5
Other	0	0

Adults were then asked how often they request assistance from the librarian and how often they use the resources found within their library (see Table 2). The resources listed were reference materials such as indexes and encyclopedias, OPAC, and databases. Although borrowing services were the number one choice for the most frequently used services, most people stated that they rarely used the online catalog. Databases were the least used resource; 61% of the adult residents stated they never use databases.

Table 2
Adults Rate How Often They Use Library Resources

Resources	Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Reference	5	16	26	14	6	67
OPAC	8	12	14	19	14	67
Databases	3	4	7	12	41	67
Ask for assistance	5	10	35	16	2	67
Total	21	42	82	61	61	201

Participants were asked whether they would attend adult library instruction. Respondents who answered no were asked to skip the question concerning choices for class

instruction. People who answered yes and undecided were asked to proceed and check the types of instruction they would like the library to offer (see Table 3). A total of 35 people proceeded with the survey. Results totaled more than 35 answers because participants could choose more than one response. Basic Internet was the most common choice. Although reference instruction was the least often answer picked, its number of responses was not far behind advanced Internet or introduction to OPAC, Dewey classification, and databases. People were also asked if they had ever attended information instruction classes. All participants answered no to ever attending such classes. One individual said instruction was received in college but answered no to ever attending a class held at a public library.

Table 3
Adult Choices for Library Instruction

Instruction	(n = 35)	%
Basic Internet	27	77
Advanced Internet	22	63
Introduction to OPAC, Dewey, and databases	21	60
Introduction to reference materials	19	54
Other	0	0

Certain demographic questions concerning age, education, and occupation were placed at the end of the survey (see Table 4 for a breakdown of ages). If someone answered no to attending future adult classes, they were not asked for age just education and occupation. People who answered yes were asked for age, occupation, and education. This was done to see if age and education determined the need for adult classes. No one who answered yes to attending future adult classes was either in the 55 – 64 or 65 and over age group. This was a limitation of the study. By selecting people who were still working, the retired population was overlooked.

Table 4
Ages of Residents Who would Attend Classes

Age	(n = 35)	%
18 - 29	11	31
30 - 44	10	29
45 - 54	14	40
55 - 64	0	0
65 and older	0	0
Total	35	100

Most of the people who returned surveys were high school and college graduates.

Demographics showing levels of education are depicted in Table 5.

Table 5
Education Levels

Education	(n = 67)	%
Some high school	3	5
High school graduates	18	29
Some college	14	21
College graduate	26	39
Some graduate school	4	6
Master's degree and above	2	3
Total	67	100

Several different occupations were represented in this study. Teachers for the mentally challenged, food service workers, maintenance workers, janitorial services, and social workers were surveyed. Also police officers, sheriff's officers, prison guards, probation personnel, court clerks, secretarial, and clerical positions were included. Some participants only responded that they were state employees; they did not list their titles or positions. At the very end of the survey, participants were asked for additional comments or suggestions. Seven people responded. Four of the seven responses were in favor of libraries. See Appendix for comments.

Librarians' Survey

To compare results between the two groups, librarians were given a survey with questions similar to the adults's survey. To see if librarians perceived a relationship between age and literacy skills, they were asked to rate patrons' skills according to age. Librarians were asked to check the age group that requested the most assistance when utilizing the different resources located within the library. The resources listed were the OPAC, databases, the Internet, and reference books. Ages were broken down into the following groups: 18 - 29 year olds, 30 - 44 year olds, 45 - 64 year olds, and 65 years of age and older (see Figure 1 regarding OPAC, Figure 2 regarding Internet, Figure 3 regarding databases, and Figure 4 regarding reference material). In all categories, 65 years of age and older was chosen as the group needing the most assistance. Although one librarian stated that the question was too hard to answer, the librarian still checked 65 years of age and older as answers to all four resources. Another librarian checked the 65 years and older age group for the responses, but stated it was actually 55 years and older.

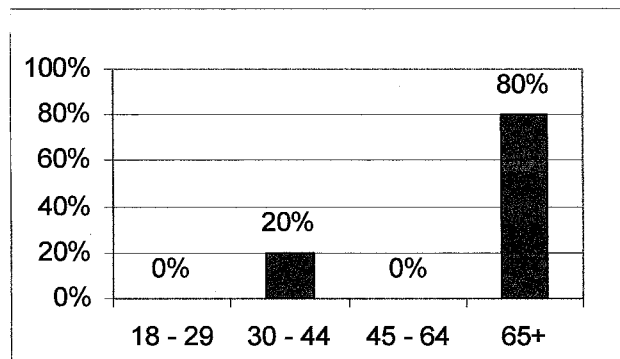


Figure 1. Age of patrons needing assistance using OPAC

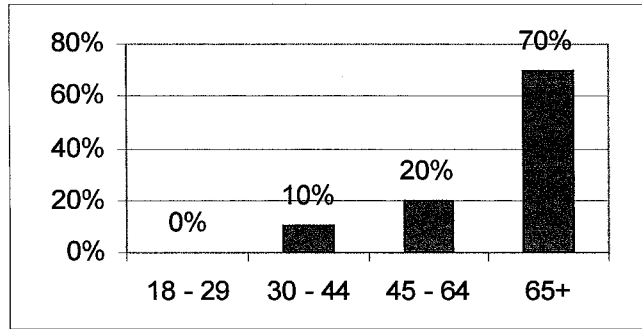


Figure 2. Age of patrons needing assistance using the Internet

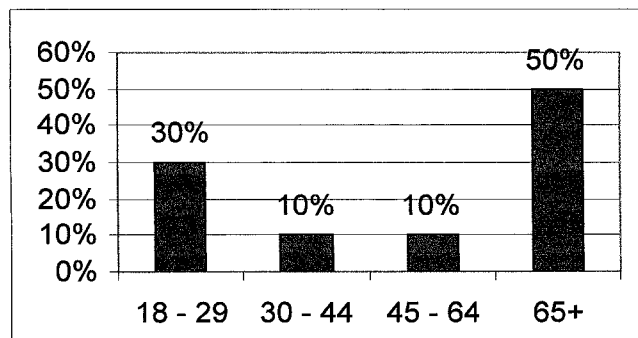


Figure 3. Age of patrons needing assistance using databases

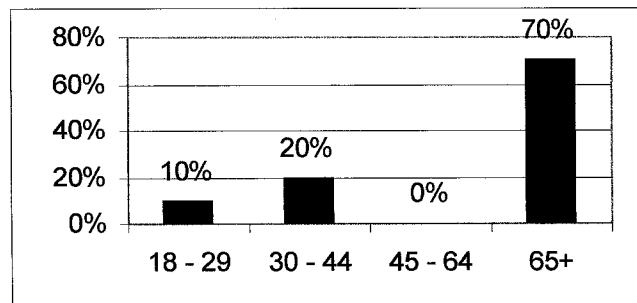


Figure 4. Age of patrons needing assistance using reference material

Librarians were not asked about the education and income levels of patrons.

Unless librarians ask patrons specific questions concerning education and income, they would not know this personal information. Rarely would librarians ask patrons such

questions. Unlike age, speculation about someone's income or education is less likely to be accurate. Therefore, there are no comparisons between the group needing the most assistance based on income or education.

What instruction is already offered at these libraries? Three of the four libraries involved in this survey offer Internet instruction. Two libraries offer word processing. Librarians from the institutions that do not provide instruction in these services do help patrons on an as-needed basis.

When asked if their libraries offered orientation classes which explain the different print and electronic resources found in the library, only one librarian answered yes. This library does offer some orientation classes but because of funding the library does not have the staff to provide a full range of instruction. Another librarian wrote in "sometimes". It should be noted that this librarian's co-workers answered no. It may have been the way the question was worded. There should have been a separate response for sometimes. Seven librarians stated their libraries do not offer library orientation and one librarian did not respond to this question.

Librarians were then asked what services would benefit their adult population. Choices were basic Internet, advanced Internet, introduction to Dewey classification, OPAC, databases, and reference books. Sixty percent of the librarians felt that instruction in all resources would benefit their patrons. One librarian chose only basic Internet instruction as an answer. Two librarians chose basic and advanced Internet. These two librarians responded that instruction in all of the categories would benefit their patrons, but their patrons would not attend classes. Two of the six librarians who selected all

the answers also chose other. One librarian listed word processing as being beneficial and another librarian stated that book selection would benefit patrons. Two librarians did not respond to this question.

At the end of the survey librarians were given space to write additional comments or suggestions. Six of the librarians did not have any additional comments or suggestions. Comments from the remaining four varied. One librarian stated that parents in the 25 - 40+ age group need help when assisting their children in using the library. Another librarian stated that people need help to use indexes in the back of books and tables of contents. People do not always know the difference between definitions such as bibliography and biography or book report and report. Also, people do not realize they have to practice the skills they learn. According to one librarian, most people just ask the librarian to look for information.

Comparison between surveys

When comparing the surveys, similarities and differences were found between the groups. The librarians' survey consisted of seven questions. In order to determine librarians' perceptions of literacy needs, they were asked to rate adult library skills utilizing different resources. Nearly 50% of the total ratings given by the librarians were in the fair category. Table 6 records the ratings reference librarians gave their patrons' skills. Table 7 records the ratings that adult patrons gave themselves. Librarians rated patrons' overall library skills as either fair or no skills. The majority of adults, however, view their overall skills as good or adequate.

Table 6
Reference Librarians Rate Adult Library Skills

Skills	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Fair	No skills	Total
Library skills	0	0	0	4	6	10
Computer skills	1	1	4	4	0	10
Databases	0	0	0	6	4	10
OPAC	0	1	2	7	0	10
Internet	0	2	2	5	1	10
Reference	0	1	2	7	0	10
Total	1	5	10	27	13	60

Table 7
Adults Rate their Library Skills

Skills	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Fair	No skills	Total
Library skills	14	27	18	6	2	67
Database	6	23	14	20	14	67
OPAC	9	19	19	7	13	67
Internet	19	28	11	1	8	67
Reference	15	33	13	5	1	67
Word processing	13	25	13	4	12	67
Total	76	155	88	43	50	402

Adults were also asked to rate their computer skill (see Figure 5). Fourteen library users rated their skills as excellent. Thirty-two people believed they have good skills. Eleven people rated their skills as adequate. Four people responded they have fair skills, and four people said they have no skills at all. The majority of participants indicated they have good computer skills; however, according to the librarians surveyed, most said their patrons have adequate or fair skills.

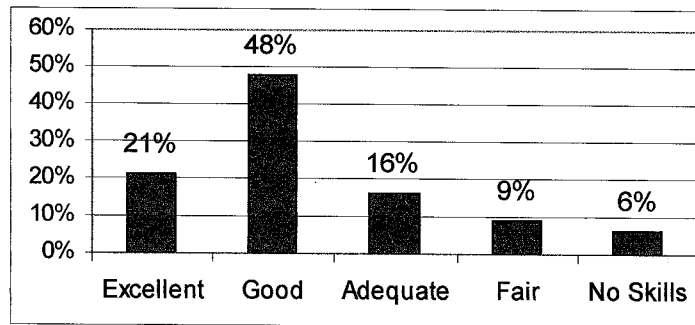


Figure 5. Adults rate their computer skills.

If library orientation classes existed, would adults participate in these classes?

Librarians were almost equally divided on this question (see Figure 6). The librarians who responded no and undecided to this question stated that most patrons do not show an interest until they need to locate or use something. It is only when they need an immediate response that they request assistance from the librarian. Past classes did not have big enrollments. According to the librarians' survey results, the Internet and word processing classes draw the biggest audience. No interest, immediate response, and no time were the most common reasons the librarians stated for patrons not attending library orientation.

Figure 6 reflects librarians' answers concerning adult attendance. Although 50% believed adults would not attend, 40% were unsure, and 10% did not respond.

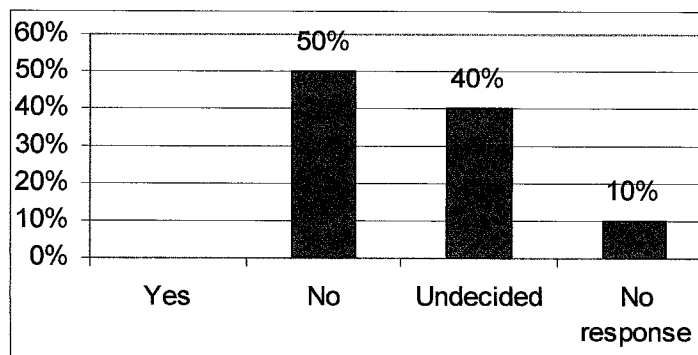


Figure 6. Librarians' response on adult attendance.

Some residents responded a little more favorably to formal instruction (see Figure 7). Fourteen participants answered they would attend classes, 32 people said no, and 21 residents were undecided. Participants were asked to explain their answers. Two people responded with explanations. One person would not attend due to the lack of time. Another person stated attendance would depend on what was being offered.

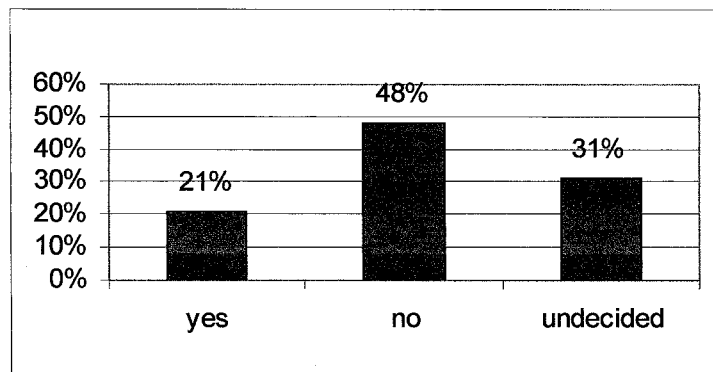


Figure 7. Adults response on class attendance.

Summary

From the survey results, it can be determined that there may be a need but not a great interest for information instruction among the adults who participated in this study. Since the return rate was low, the survey results cannot support definite statements concerning the library behavior or skills of residents in Cumberland County. Among those who participated, there is a difference in perception on the level of skills patrons' possess. The majority of adults rated their abilities higher than the ratings the librarians gave their patrons.

The majority of residents who participated in this survey do not use their public library. The exact reasons are not known, but the Internet and lack of time may play large

roles. Some people told the researcher that they simply go to the Internet for information and lack of time prohibits their attendance at the public library.

The majority of librarians indicated that residents would benefit from library instruction but would probably not attend. According to librarians, lack of time, lack of interest, and the need for immediate answers are reasons why adults may not participate in such programs. All of the librarians stated that the senior population requires the most help when using the library but assistance on an as-needed basis still prevails.

Lack of funding also prevents public libraries from offering instruction and the hours needed for patrons to practice newly learned computer skills. In chapter five, the limitations of this study are discussed and recommendations for future studies and research concerning information literacy are stated.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Since non-library users returned the majority of surveys, one cannot generalize on the skills or library behavior of adults in Cumberland County. The librarians who participated in this study do see a need for information instruction among their adult patrons; however, they stated lack of interest prevents adults from participating. Since there were adults who answered yes and undecided to attending adult classes, one cannot rule out the possibility of incorporating instructional classes in future services.

Conclusions

There were some limitations to this survey. The sample must be broadened to include the senior population, especially since this is the segment that appears to need the most assistance. Although most of the participants were either high school or college graduates, education alone is not the only factor when determining someone's library skills. Education may definitely play an important role, but exposure to computer technology has the greatest impact on an individual's skill. Because technology is new, older graduates may not have developed computer skills. Still, others may not practice or retain what they've learned.

To broaden the sample and include more library users, surveys could be distributed to patrons at public libraries. Out of the 185 surveys distributed, only 67 were library users. This return was not enough to study the library skills of most library patrons. Distributing surveys to library patrons would reach more individuals who already use the library services. This might have given a better return to study information literacy needs.

Including non-library users is good for two reasons. First, the researcher may reach segments of the population that do not use the library because they lack skills and are afraid to approach the librarians. According to one librarian in the survey, these are the people that are never reached. Secondly, it gives non-library users the chance to state what services if any they would use if these services were offered.

Wording in the survey may have affected the responses received. Initially, participants were asked if they ever use their public library. Some participants stated that they rarely use the library but completed a survey anyway. There may have been some people who did not complete this survey because they felt their use was too infrequent. A better question may have been, how often do you use your public library? Besides affecting the number of surveys returned back, wording may have also changed the answers received. When adults were asked what services they use the most, borrowing services was the number one choice. Yet, when participants were asked how often they use the online catalog, 19 participants responded "rarely". If people are borrowing from or browsing the collection, they would need to utilize OPAC at least sometimes to locate material within the library. Maybe some participants did not understand the term

online catalog. This terminology should have been explained.

There is no simple explanation why the adults rated their abilities higher than the librarians rated their patrons' skills. Librarians come into contact with many different people with varying skills and abilities. Maybe people with fewer skills approach librarians more often. It could be that the participants in this study do have very good skills and do not approach librarians frequently because they are able to be independent. Again, it may also be the difference in perception between the two groups.

Recommendations

Before making any recommendations concerning the implementation of library instruction, further studies would have to be done to determine the needs and desires of adult residents. According to the literature review, the success of these programs depends on how instruction relates to the everyday needs of people's lives. This research did not determine the everyday needs or activities present in the daily lives of adult residents in Cumberland County. Therefore, the researcher cannot say whether the literature review supports the study. Additional research must be completed to determine if there are any segments of the population that require special instruction.

Working with senior centers, outreach services, local high schools, and other community centers may provide insight into the types of individuals who would participate and benefit from these services. Does the community have a large number of non-English speaking people that need to develop their computer and English language skills? Would seniors participate in programs? Again, further studies would have to be completed

before recommendations may be made. Since there were individuals who responded yes and undecided to attending adult classes, maybe stimulating interest in certain segments of the adult population would should show positive results. It must also be remembered that funding and staffing also plays important roles in whether these programs are implemented and maintained within the community.

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Appendix

Rowan University

Department of Secondary Education
Program in School and Public Librarianship

March 2, 2002

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University completing my degree in Public Librarianship. As a research project for my thesis, I am studying information literacy in Cumberland County, New Jersey. To complete this project, I am distributing two separate surveys to adult residents and reference librarians. My goal is to compare the results from these surveys to help determine the need for information literacy instruction in Cumberland County.

If you wish to participate, please complete the attached survey by March 10, 2002. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. For any questions concerning this survey, you may contact Dr. Holly Willett at 8560256-4759. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Battelini

The Public Library and Information Literacy

The following survey will be distributed to reference librarians in the four public library facilities located in Cumberland County, New Jersey. The goal of this survey is to determine whether information literacy classes are needed for adults in Cumberland County, New Jersey. Please return all surveys in the self-addressed stamped envelope before March 12, 2002. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

1. Please rate the skills of the average adult patron over 18 on the following:
 - a. Overall library skills Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
 - b. Computer skills Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
 - c. Database Searching Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
 - d. OPAC Searching Excellent Good Adequate Fair No skills
 - e. Internet Searching Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
 - f. Reference Books Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills

2. Please indicate the age group that requires the most assistance when using the following resources:
 - a. OPAC 18 - 29 30 - 44 45 - 64 65 and older
 - b. Databases 18 - 29 30 - 44 45 - 64 65 and older
 - c. Internet 18 - 29 30 - 44 45 - 64 65 and older
 - d. Reference Books 18 - 29 30 - 44 45 - 64 65 and older

3. Does your library currently offer Internet instruction?
Yes No

4. Does your library currently offer word processing instruction?
Yes No

5. Does your library offer library orientation classes which explain through hands-on experience the various print and electronic resources available at the library?

Yes If yes, stop please stop here. Thank you for completing this survey.

No If no, please complete the survey.

6. Do you think the general public would participate in these classes if they were available?

Yes No Undecided

Please explain _____

7. What type of information literacy classes do you think would benefit your adult patrons?
Please check all that apply.

- Basic Internet classes
 - Advanced Internet instruction including Web evaluation
 - Introduction to the online catalog, Dewey classification, and databases
 - Introduction to reference material such as indexes and encyclopedia
 - Other, please explain _____
-

Please list any other comments or suggestions:

Thank you for your time and participation with this survey. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Adult Library Services

The following survey is designed to research services and programs needed for adults at public libraries located within Cumberland County New Jersey. Your participation is greatly appreciated. All responses are confidential and anonymous. Please check the following.

1. Are you a resident of Cumberland County over the age of eighteen?

- Yes No If no, please stop here.

2. Do you ever visit your local public or county library?

- Yes No If no, please stop here.

3. What services do you use at your public library? Please check all that apply.

- Internet
 - Word processing
 - Children's services
 - Borrow books, videos, or other items from the library collection
 - Attend public functions offered by the library
 - Participate in classes for adults offered by the library
 - Databases
 - Reference books such as encyclopedias, indexes, and dictionaries
 - Ask librarians to help you locate information
 - Read newspapers or magazines
 - Other, please explain _____
-

4. When looking for information, how often do you ask the librarian for assistance?

- Frequently Often Sometimes Rarely Never

5. How often do you use reference books such as indexes, dictionaries, and encyclopedias?

- Frequently Often Sometimes Rarely Never

6. How often do you use the online catalog to locate books or other items from the library collection?

- Frequently Often Sometimes Rarely Never

7. How often do you use electronic databases such as EbscoHost to locate newspaper or magazine articles?

- Frequently Often Sometimes Rarely Never

8. Please rate your overall computer skills.

- Excellent. I use several computer programs including the Internet and e-mail.
 Good. I use some computer programs including the Internet and e-mail.
 Adequate. I am comfortable using a computer.
 Fair. I am just beginning to use the computer.
 No skills. I have never used a computer.

9. Please rate your skills using the following resources:

- a. Overall library skills Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
b. Database searching Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
c. Online catalog Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
d. Internet searching Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
e. Reference Books Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills
f. Word processing Excellent Good Adequate Fair No Skills

10. Have you ever attended adult classes at your library?

- Yes No

If yes, please describe _____

11. Would you attend adult classes at your library that explain the various print and electronic resources available to locate information?

- Yes No If no, please go to question 14. Undecided
Please explain your answer _____
-

12. What type of library skills classes should public libraries offer?

- Basic Internet instruction
- Advanced Internet instruction
- Introduction to the online catalog, Dewey classification, and databases
- Introduction to reference materials such as indexes and encyclopedias
- Other, please explain

13. Please check the box which indicates your age.

- 18 - 29 years of age
- 30 - 44 years of age
- 45 - 54 years of age
- 55 - 64 years of age
- 65 and over

14. Please indicate your level of education.

- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- College graduate
- Some graduate school
- Master's degree and above

15. What is your current occupation?

16. Please add any additional comments about your public library use.

Thank you for your time and participation. Your help in this research is greatly appreciated.

Adults' Survey

Question 16. Please add any additional comments about your public library use. Adults responded with the following answers:

- 1. Hope they never close**
- 2. They should have more computers**
- 3. Love the library!**
- 4. More activities are geared toward children**
- 5. Have not used the library in several years**
- 6. Public libraries are necessary in the community, providing a great service. So many times in my children's education it was invaluable**
- 7. Very seldom use.**