



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK: SUMMARY

PREPARED BY:

Sarah Keister Armstrong & Associates, LLC

Phone: (224) 305-2701

Email: sarah@skaassociates.com

Website: www.skaassociates.com

SEPTEMBER 2018

INTRODUCTION

To remain a cornerstone of community information, recreation, and learning, today's public library must strategically position itself to adapt to changes in its service area, technology, and the library industry. The following data and community feedback will provide Wheaton Public Library with information as it develops its new strategic plan.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The following pages include demographic information detailing trends in Wheaton's population, as well as data regarding current housing and occupational indicators.

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR	2005-2009	2006-2010	2007-2011	2008-2012	2009-2013	2010-2014	2011-2015	2012-2016
TOTAL POPULATION	54,341	53,141	53,082	53,155	53,245	53,406	53,585	53,568
Native; born in state of residence	31,956	30,894	30,870	31,097	32,030	32,367	33,137	33,323
Native; born in other state in the U.S.	16,571	15,876	15,570	15,248	14,664	14,627	14,350	14,012
Native; born outside U.S.	851	847	736	751	675	688	710	645
Foreign-born	4,963	5,524	5,906	6,059	5,876	5,724	5,388	5,588
AGE								
Under 5 years	5.5%	5.3%	5.3%	5.3%	5.7%	5.7%	6.0%	5.8%
5 to 17 years	17.9%	18.0%	18.0%	18.0%	17.8%	17.5%	17.5%	17.6%
18 to 24 years	13.1%	12.0%	11.8%	11.9%	11.8%	11.6%	11.4%	11.2%
25 to 44 years	23.9%	24.4%	24.2%	23.9%	23.5%	23.0%	22.8%	23.3%
45 to 54 years	16.3%	16.4%	15.9%	16.2%	15.9%	15.4%	14.4%	13.6%
55 to 64 years	11.1%	11.8%	12.2%	12.2%	12.7%	13.1%	14.1%	14.5%
65 to 74 years	5.4%	5.5%	5.9%	6.1%	6.5%	7.2%	7.8%	8.2%
75 years and over	6.8%	6.7%	6.7%	6.3%	6.1%	6.4%	6.0%	5.8%
Median age (years)	37.4	37.6	38.1	37.8	37.8	38.5	38.6	38.0
SEX								
Male	47.9%	47.5%	47.9%	48.7%	48.5%	48.0%	48.2%	48.8%
Female	52.1%	52.5%	52.1%	51.3%	51.5%	52.0%	51.8%	51.2%
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN								
One race	97.3%	97.1%	97.2%	97.2%	97.2%	97.7%	97.6%	97.6%
White	89.2%	87.9%	87.6%	86.9%	86.6%	87.3%	86.9%	86.1%
Black or African American	2.9%	3.2%	3.1%	3.4%	3.6%	3.8%	4.2%	4.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Asian	4.2%	5.1%	5.6%	6.3%	6.3%	6.2%	5.9%	6.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Some other race	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%
Two or more races	2.7%	2.9%	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	4.6%	5.1%	5.1%	4.9%	5.5%	4.9%	4.8%	5.0%

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR	2005- 2009	2006- 2010	2007- 2011	2008- 2012	2009- 2013	2010- 2014	2011- 2015	2012- 2016
LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME AND ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH								
Population 5 years and over	51,364	50,331	50,262	50,334	50,221	50,337	50,381	50,485
Speak language other than English	13.0%	14.7%	15.0%	15.6%	15.1%	14.1%	13.2%	12.9%
Speak English "very well"	9.5%	10.3%	9.7%	9.9%	10.1%	9.5%	9.2%	8.8%
Speak English less than "very well"	3.6%	4.5%	5.3%	5.7%	5.0%	4.6%	4.0%	4.1%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT								
Population 25 years and over	34,550	34,421	34,445	34,436	34,480	34,825	34,873	35,051
Less than high school graduate	4.4%	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%	4.3%	4.2%	3.8%	3.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	12.9%	11.9%	11.6%	11.4%	12.0%	12.4%	12.0%	11.0%
Some college or associate's degree	23.8%	23.8%	24.1%	22.8%	22.9%	22.3%	22.4%	22.4%
Bachelor's degree	34.3%	34.2%	34.0%	35.2%	35.2%	35.5%	36.0%	36.3%
Graduate or professional degree	24.7%	25.3%	25.5%	25.8%	25.5%	25.6%	25.8%	26.4%
INDIVIDUALS' INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS								
Population 15 years and over	44,103	43,159	43,275	43,404	43,443	43,487	43,630	43,475
\$1 to \$9,999 or loss	21.9%	20.8%	20.9%	20.2%	20.1%	20.0%	19.7%	18.6%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5.7%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	5.7%	5.6%	5.6%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.4%	9.3%	9.2%	9.3%	9.1%	9.2%	9.2%	8.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.9%	7.6%	8.4%	8.2%	8.0%	8.1%	7.7%	8.1%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10.7%	10.4%	9.8%	10.0%	10.0%	9.7%	10.0%	9.8%
\$50,000 to \$64,999	8.6%	9.0%	8.4%	8.4%	8.4%	8.7%	9.2%	9.2%
\$65,000 to \$74,999	4.0%	4.6%	4.8%	4.6%	4.3%	4.5%	4.2%	4.2%
\$75,000 or more	21.6%	21.7%	21.7%	21.9%	21.6%	21.9%	21.8%	23.2%
Median household income (dollars)	\$85,257	\$86,229	\$84,980	\$86,074	\$86,124	\$84,833	\$85,705	\$91,241

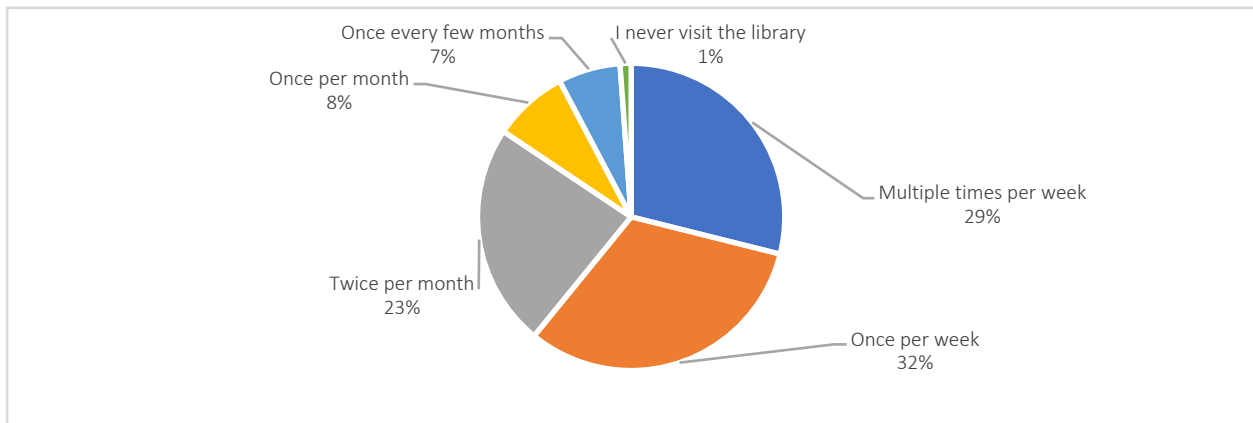
Source: American Community Survey, 2005-2009 through 2012-2016 Five-Year Estimates.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

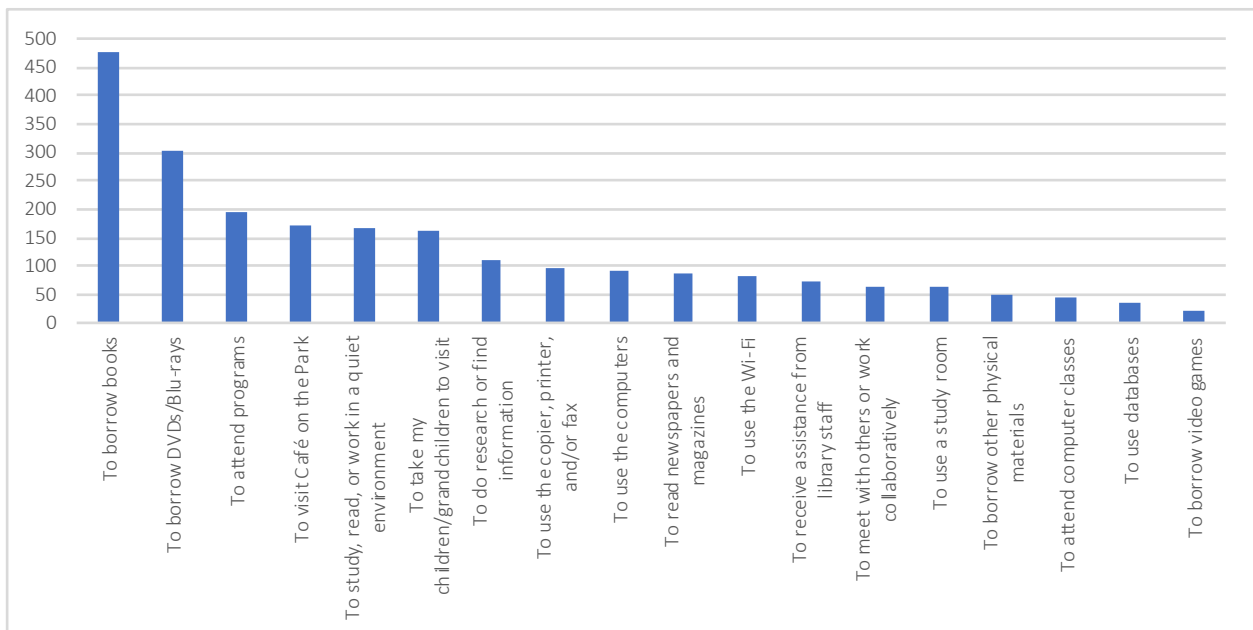
An online survey was distributed from August 13 through September 7, 2018 via eNewsletter and posts on social media and the library’s website. Paper copies were also made available at the library. During the open survey period, 528 survey responses (representing 1,428 household members) were received. Survey results are provided below.

Please note: With the exception of minor spelling and grammar corrections, written comments appear as they were submitted.

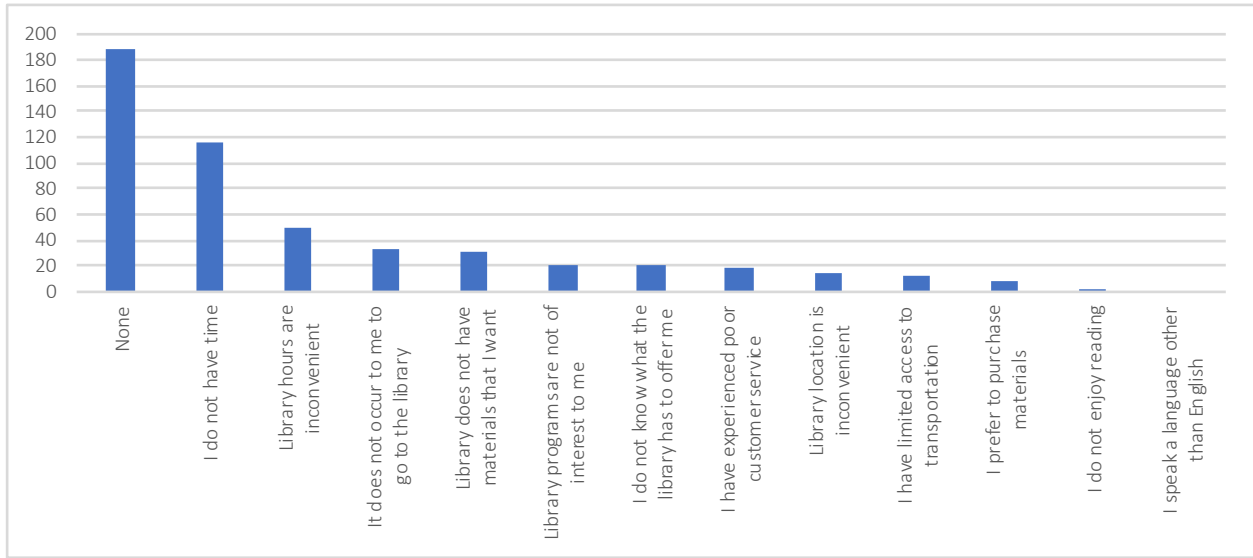
How often do you visit the Wheaton Public Library?



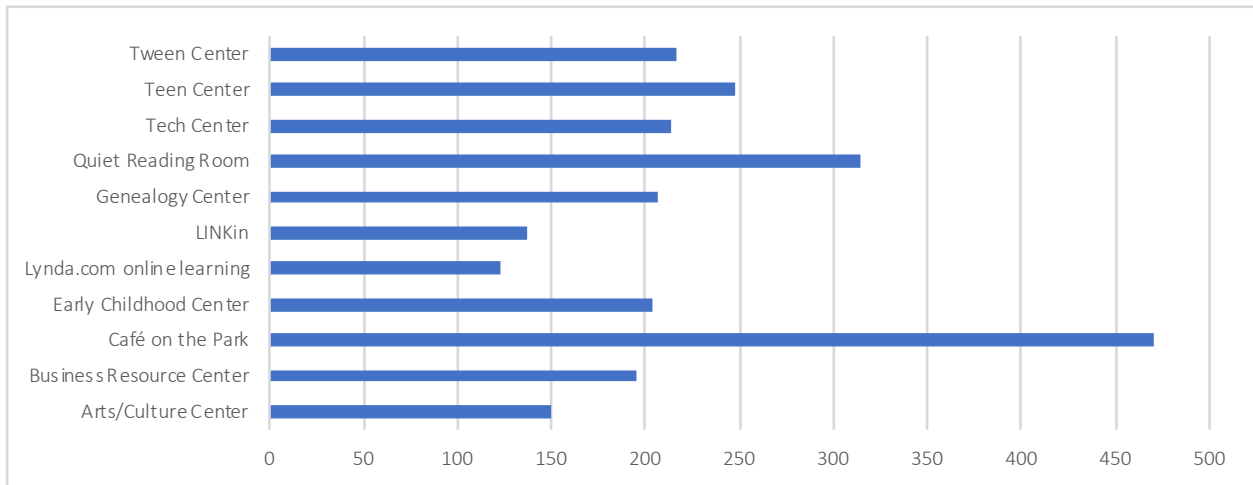
What are your reasons for visiting the library? (Please check all that apply.)



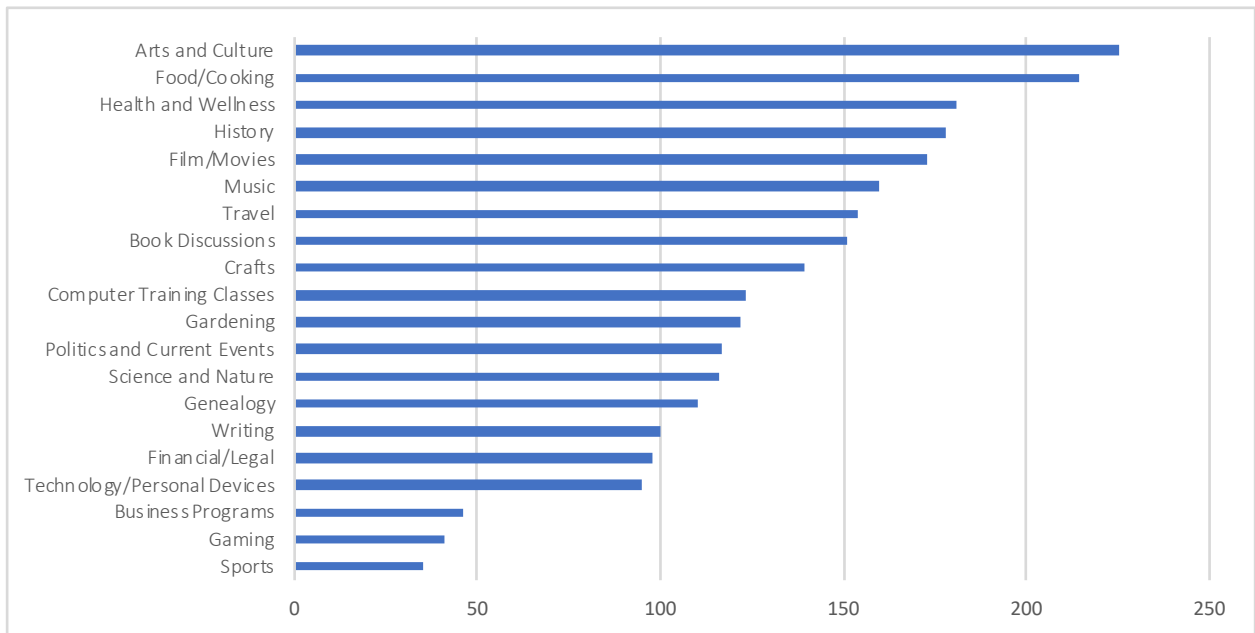
Which factors reflect why you do not visit the library more often, if any? (Please check all that apply.)



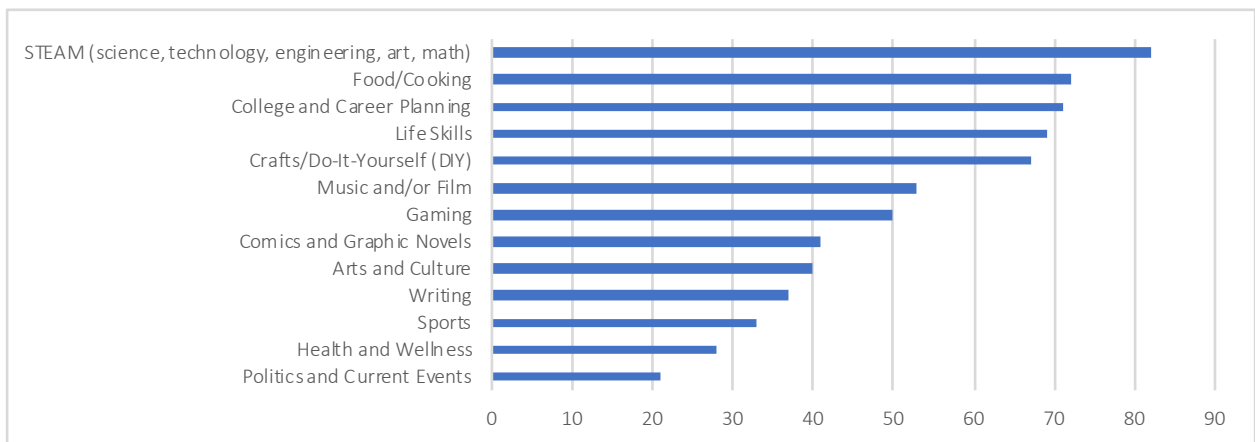
Of which library initiatives listed below are you aware? (Please check all that apply.)



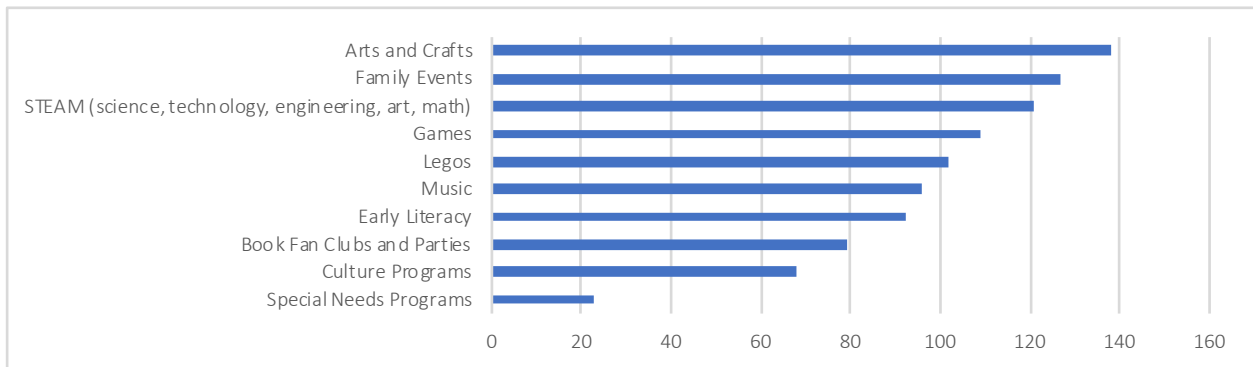
Please indicate which ADULT program topics you or a member of your household would be interested in attending. (Please check all that apply.)



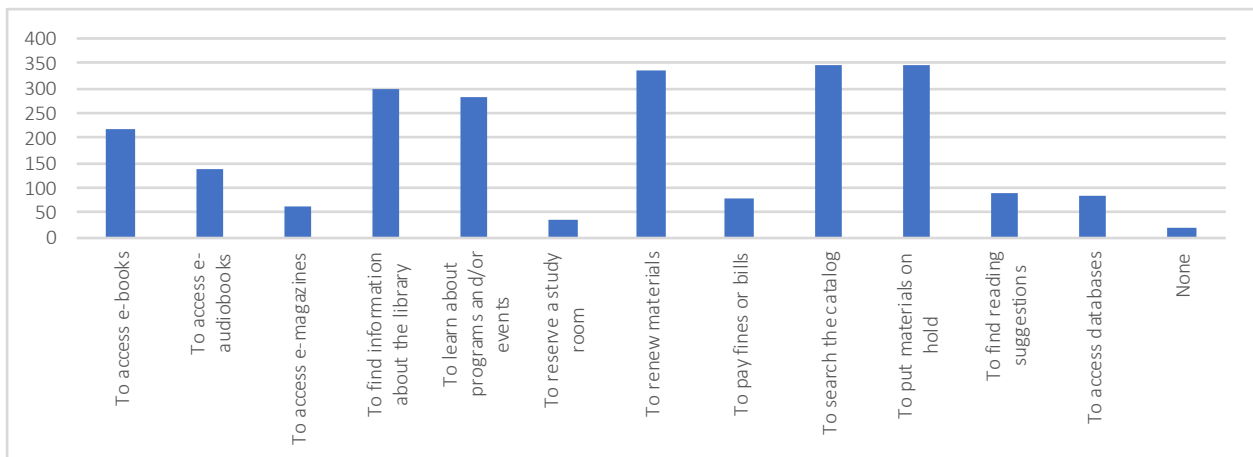
Please indicate which TEEN program topics you or a member of your household would be interested in attending. (Please check all that apply.)



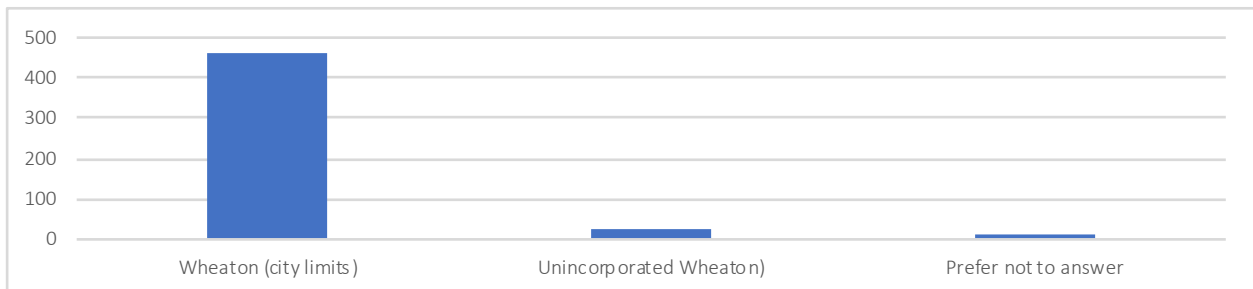
Please indicate which CHILDREN'S program topics you or a member of your household would be interested in attending. (Please check all that apply.)



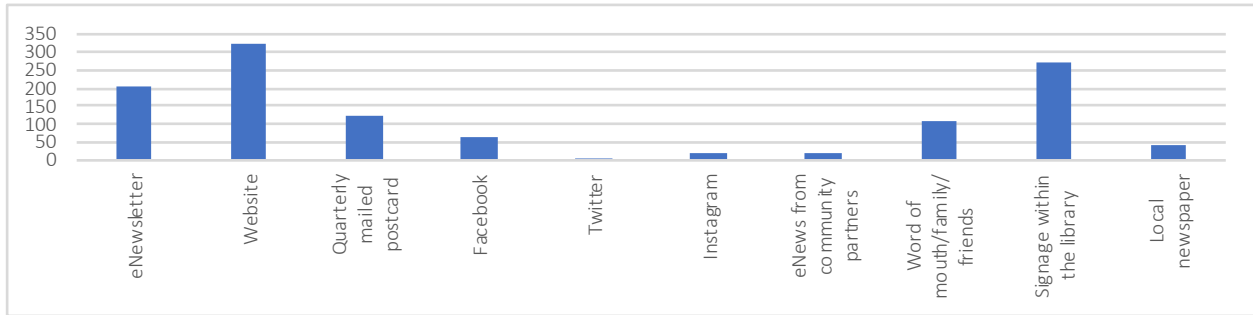
Please select the following ways you have used the library's online resources. (Please check all that apply.)



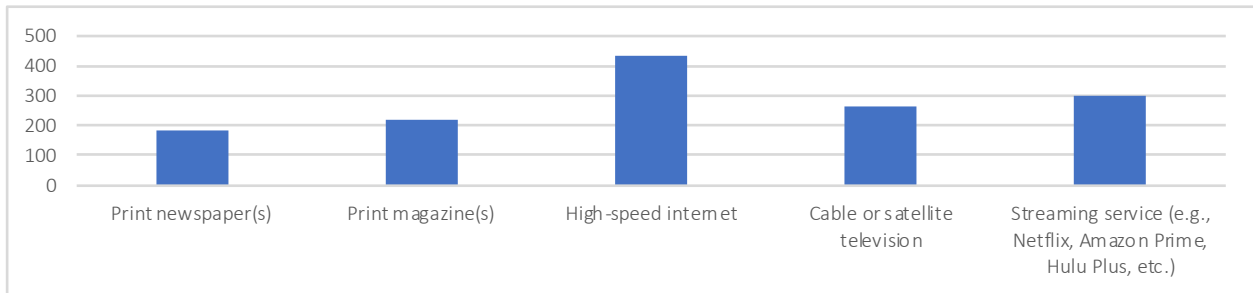
Where do you live?



How do you receive information about the library? (Please check all that apply.)



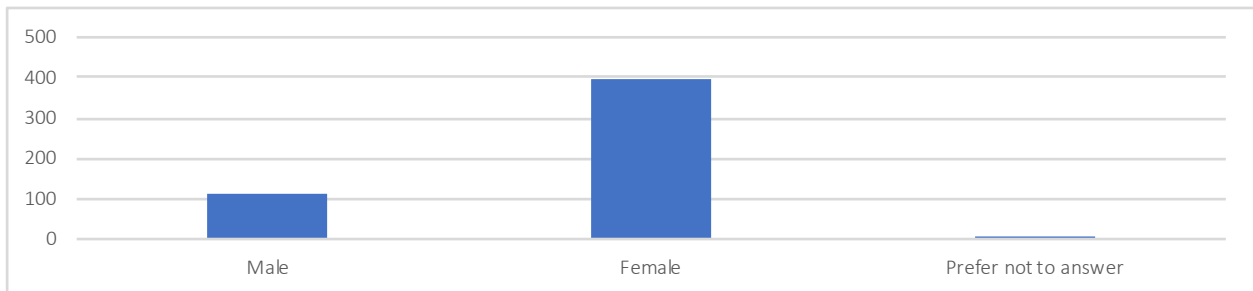
Which of the following services do you subscribe to at home? (Please check all that apply.)



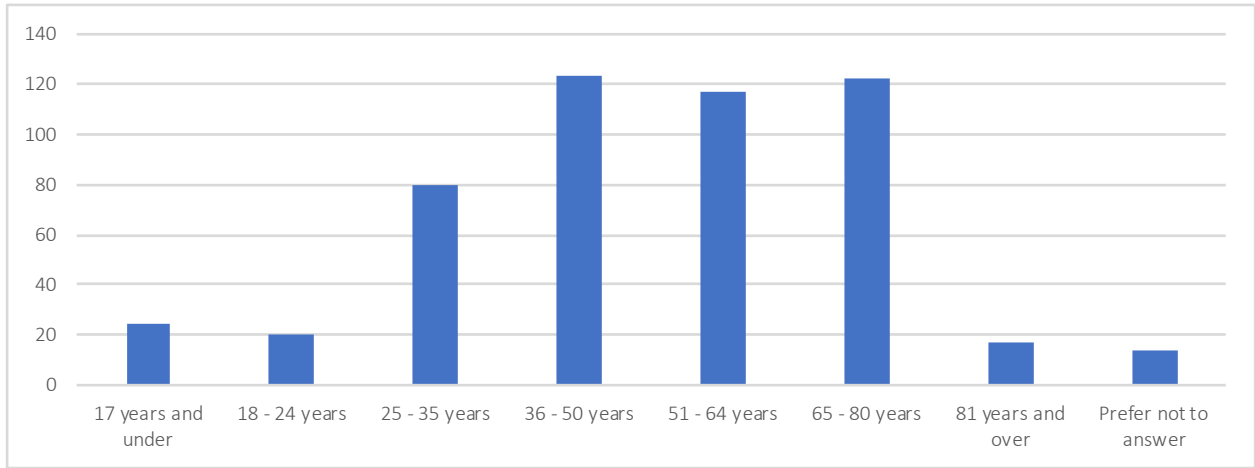
Other than English, what languages do you speak at home, if any?

Several languages were listed in the responses to this question; Spanish was the most commonly referenced.

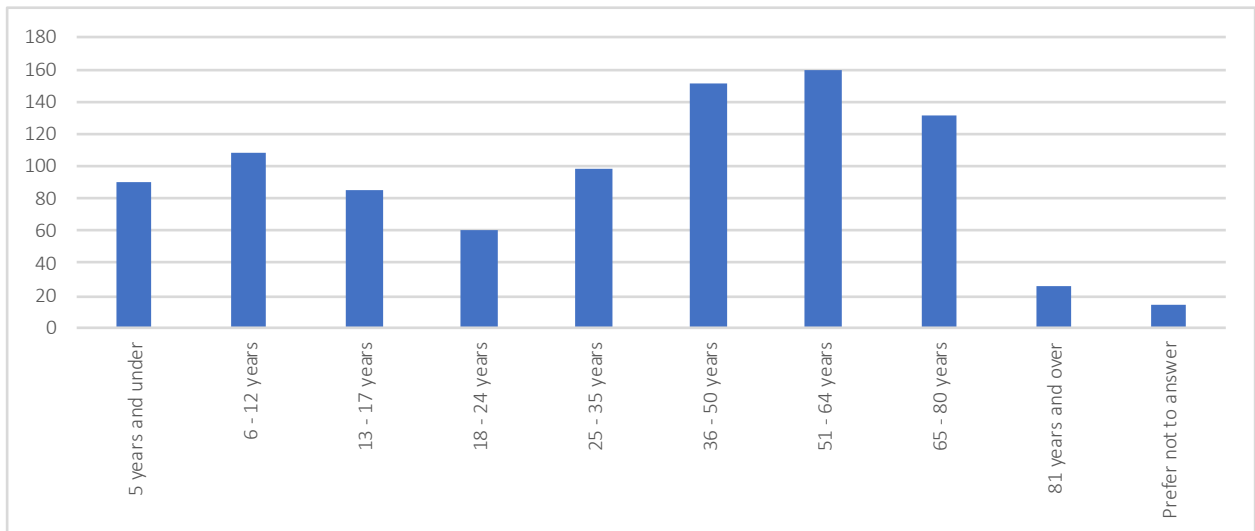
Please select your gender.



Please select your age range.



Please select the ages of the people in your household, including yourself. (Please check all that apply.)



The survey included several open-ended questions, including the following:

- What first comes to mind when you think of the Wheaton Public Library?
- If the library has not met your needs, please tell us why. What problems or difficulties have you encountered while visiting the library, if any?
- Fill in the blank: I wish the library would:
- What do you like most about the Wheaton Public Library?

The following summary provides an overview of the common responses and themes collected through these open-ended questions:

Awareness

Survey respondents self-reported the greatest level of awareness for visible initiatives (e.g., the Café on the Park, the Quiet Reading Room, Teen Center, Tween Center, Tech Center, Genealogy Center, and Early Childhood Center) and less awareness of initiatives that are not visible in the physical library building (LINKin and Lynda.com online learning). Many of the comments highlighted a continued need to communicate what the library is offering, in a variety of communications methods and in a repeated fashion.

Survey respondents frequently questioned recent changes to the physical space within the library, including where collections are located and the size of the collections. There appeared to be some confusion regarding the process for weeding materials. Survey respondents generally continued to value the traditional role of the library in offering physical materials to borrow, and, consequently, many expressed concerns about the size of the total collection, which visibly has filled a larger footprint in the past.

What first comes to mind when you think of the Wheaton Public Library?

selection children quiet service good kids resource nice Great
friendly books community place materials reading lots library
wonderful programs staff

User Experience

The most common complaints about using the library included: perceived lack of availability of popular materials, including recent bestsellers; noise in areas of the library where some patrons expected a quieter atmosphere; and desire for expanded hours of operation (particularly on Friday evenings until 6

pm and Sunday afternoons during the summer). While the collected survey data included some comments regarding negative experiences with customer service received at the library, the staff were praised by many other respondents, and staff friendliness and helpfulness were frequently cited as assets to the library.

Preference for program topics and suggestions for future programs highlighted the desire for programs that are interactive in nature and/or focused on learning new skills (e.g., Arts and Culture, STEAM, Food/Cooking). Other comments and suggestions for improvement in library service focused on changes that would improve the overall experience of a patron using the library, including a drive-up book drop, minor updates to the restrooms, and ideas for improving policies regarding public use of the library by individuals and organizations.

Support of the Library

What do you like most about the Wheaton Public Library?

place use read helpful materials available great quiet library
good books kids staff friendly selection nice resources area
programs love

Overall, survey respondents were pleased with the library and were often enthusiastic in their praise of changes the library has made during the past few years. Among these changes and updates, the addition of the Café in the Park was widely lauded, and responses indicated increased engagement with the library from a broad cross-section of the community. Reasons for not visiting the library more often generally included reasons related to convenience – program hours and overall hours of operation – rather than lack of relevance to the Wheaton community.

It is clear that Wheaton Public Library has a strong presence in the community and is considered an important asset to the downtown area of Wheaton.

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

A series of individual interviews and community focus groups were held during September 2018 to solicit input from a variety of key library stakeholders.

RESIDENTS

Two focus groups were held with residents of Wheaton and unincorporated Wheaton to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the library, as well as how the community perceives the library.

Participants listed numerous strengths of the library:

- "Faxing, printing, scanning"
- "They are listening to the community"
- "Business Resource Center"
- "Keeping up with technology"
- "Kids' section"
- "How it's changed over the past couple years"
- "Interlibrary loan"
- "LINKin"
- "Things to check out like Roku and snap circuits"
- "DJ is like a national treasure"
- "The staff are all so patient"
- "Let's give a shout out to the staff!"
- "My daughter is dyslexic, and I don't expect the library to cater to dyslexic people, but there was one point where I inquired at the reference desk, and they made me aware of this amazing resource (Talking Books) – wish they would make this more well known."
- "Wheaton Public Library balances community with peacefulness and charm that is very respectful of learning"
- "It's so easy now to put a book on hold"
- "Axis 360 app – I like having downloadables when traveling"
- "Atmosphere of being in the library – feels calm, nice, spacious"
- "Reading room on the second floor is especially attractive"
- "The café has really opened it up to the community"
- "People who wouldn't normally go to the library love to go to the café"
- "It's a welcoming and safe place for teens"
- "We just find it a tremendous blessing to our family"
- "I'm surprised by the diversity and quantity of kids' programs"

Participants also discussed what they perceived as weaknesses of the library, including:

- "Hours – not open late enough on Fridays"
- "Sunday summer closing is ridiculous"

- "One could argue that the schools should provide access to practice tests for motivated parents, but they do not to my knowledge"
- "The library should serve speakers of non-English language in their native languages and contain holdings that reflect the demographics of its population, and also help English speakers communicate with non-English speaking neighbors"
- "Got rid of study carrels"
- "It is a new day and age for organizations promoting themselves; the library needs to add new ways to promote the programs"
- "Too noisy"
- "My family and I find the staff to be aloof and unhelpful"
- "There are an increasing number of people who come into their library with their strollers and their cell phones. Considering the fact that the stacks are on the first floor, it's disabling actually, you can't half the time scan the books there without a lot of this going on. Libraries used to be a place of quiet."
- "Need to do a better job telling us what they have"
- "Need a drop box where we don't have to get out of the car"
- "Wheaton has the weakest e-book collection, and you can only have five holds"
- "Too much weeding"
- "For me, culture and languages are really important, and I feel that the library should be serving that role, so aligning more with the demographics of the community."
- "They shouldn't get rid of out-of-print books"
- "We need coat hooks and purse shelves in the bathrooms"
- "Hand dryers are terrible"
- "Make this library more relevant by certainly doing a lot more on social media which doesn't cost another cent in taxpayer dollars"
- "Absolutely love the library, love checking out books, love audiobooks – think the library is fantastic. I do get frustrated by the constant shuffling and trying to find the best location for everything. Once I know where a section is, that tends to be what I do when I come to the library. I like exploring in a section."
- "Don't like that they took comfortable furniture away...it's not an attractive way to display the artwork"
- "I miss the newsletter but know it's expensive"

Participants were generally all regular library users, but they expressed some disagreement about what the role of the library should be in Wheaton. Several participants shared disappointment regarding recent weeding of the collection and viewed the library through a more traditional lens, as a place to house books of all types, regardless of demand. Others appreciated the newer aspects to WPL's library service, including the incorporation of the Café in the Park in the library building and the increased resources available in the Tech Center.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Participants of a focus group composed of members of the Friends of the Library discussed strengths and weaknesses of the library, as well as potential challenges it may face in the future. Participants cited the following strengths of the library:

- "It's always busy"
- "Parking lot is always full"
- "Adult programs are strong, and the movie programs are very well attended"
- "Great presence in the community"
- "Always write-ups about what's going on at the library"
- "The library reaches out to different age groups"
- "The public library is the only public facility that everyone in town will go to regardless of where they live within Wheaton"
- "Surprised by how much there is in the genealogy area"
- "Like the outdoor events in the summertime"
- "Incorporating the beautiful park is just lovely, especially in good weather"

Participants also discussed what were perceived as weaknesses of the library, including the following:

- "Wheaton's library doesn't have the impression of a reading site. There is a tremendous amount of space, but not enough comfortable space to park yourself with a book."
- "Disappointed in lack of printed newsletter"
- "There are people in this town who have a difficult time getting to the library and don't have a computer or electronic device, so they're going to miss out on things"
- "What is happening to all the books? Books are going off the shelves fast."
- "Hold lists are too long"
- "Why is Wheaton different from other libraries in being available at certain times? Is this a budget thing? Wheaton is closed on Sundays in the summer and Fridays at 5:00 pm."

The most significant challenges participants noted were ensuring the sustainability of the membership of the Friends organization and communicating the benefits of the library to residents of Wheaton and unincorporated Wheaton without the traditional print newsletter.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

A focus group was held with leaders representing various community organizations and units of local government, including Wheaton Chamber of Commerce, Wheaton Park District, City of Wheaton, Downtown Wheaton Association, Literacy DuPage, Metropolitan Family Services DuPage, Jefferson Early Childhood Center, Wheaton College, DuPage County Historical Museum, Metropolitan Family Services DuPage, Monroe Middle School, Hubble Middle School, Wheaton North High School, St. Francis High School, and Wheaton Warrenville South High School.

Community leaders discussed unique aspects of Wheaton, as well as challenges they viewed the community facing. Participants felt that there remains a strong opportunity for Wheaton to not only collaborate with other neighboring communities, including pulling DuPage County communities together to amplify the attractiveness of “the county as a destination rather than individual suburbs,” but also to develop a more robust, centralized place for residents to find information about community events and news. Participants praised the library’s efforts to effectively partner with community organizations, including on early childhood education initiatives and resources for local benefits.

Additional strengths of the library cited included:

- “Great place to be and have presence”
- “Under [the director’s] leadership, the collaborative nature of the library has excelled”
- “Very good job of keeping up with library trends”
- “There has been a change in culture and a shift to collaboration”
- “Really great genealogy department as part of reference”
- “It’s now a community gathering place”
- “People think of the library as a source for all information”

Participants listed several suggestions for library service moving forward, including:

- Wine nights to cultivate interest and engagement with young working professionals
- Work with other relevant organizations to support the needs of refugees who start their own businesses
- Shared promotion of eNewsletter and community events
- Consider using a meeting room or other area of the library for rental for events to provide additional community space and serve as a revenue generator
- Enhance teen area and make it “more exciting” and “delineated”
- Ensure signage on shelving is correct and logical
- Partner to provide mental health first aid training programs to help individuals handle interactions with those facing mental health challenges in a compassionate way that encourages appropriate behavior
- Serve as a home to a Wheaton local history room dedicated to preserving the history of Wheaton
- Offer 3D printer services for residents and local businesses

LIBRARY STAFF

A focus group with staff members included discussions about the library’s strengths and weaknesses, and responses to implementation of the previous strategic plan. Participants recognized the following strengths of the library:

- “Meeting patron needs”
- “Moving things to better places”
- “Good programming”
- “The morale is better for patrons”

- "Community awareness is much higher. They know what's going on here."
- "It's brighter – the whole library is more light"
- "More welcoming"
- "Youth area changed a lot – there are actually teens hanging out here"
- "We use social media a lot and have better community engagement"
- "We have a great group of people here"
- "It's an unusually cohesive group of people who work together extremely well"
- "We have a high level of commitment to this library"

Participants cited the following weaknesses of the library:

- "Don't really know what we do to provide for patrons who are unable to come here"
- "I think we should toot our horn more and publicize things"
- "There might be room for more connections with colleges in the area"
- "We could work with schools by attending curriculum nights to speak directly to parents"
- "Why couldn't we have a fundraiser? There are a lot of things we could do"
- "Drive up book return"
- "Redo paging – there should be a limit"
- "Maybe we could look at the study room policy and how people reserve them"