

Community and Staff Engagement Findings Aligned with Strategic Plan Goals

All data points included in this report comes from the statistically valid phone survey of library users and non-users, unless otherwise indicated. Web survey refers to an online survey to which more than 1,500 residents responded. Residents could also take the web survey on paper at library branches and at community events. Additional engagement included community meetings, partner and service provider focus groups, staff focus groups and a staff survey.

Goal 1: Reading

Quality books and other traditional library offerings continue to rank the highest in terms of programs and services residents use or desire.

- 51 percent of library users mentioned books as the main service they use. 79 percent of web survey respondents indicated that they are most likely to access books, e-books and downloadable video and audio materials when they use the library.
- 40 percent of non-users said they would be most likely to access books, e-books and downloadable video and audio materials, while 38 percent mentioned adult continuing education and lifelong learning programs.
- One-in-four users mentioned that they wish the library had newer books or a larger collection.
- Staff agreed that a library should focus on having the best collections of books and resources and help members of the community read, research, learn and grow. In a survey, nearly half of staff surveyed ranked “books and reading” as their top priority for their ideal vision for the library of the future.

In addition to access, residents emphasize promoting literacy as a main priority for the library moving forward.

- Participants at the Anacostia community meeting emphasized that there needs to be greater availability of literacy-based programming for both children and adults. In addition, while it is understood that books are important, some explained they believe that the library should take it one step further to improve information literacy, not just access.

Goal 2: Digital Citizenship

Access to computers and the Internet and improving the quality of technology is important to many sectors of the community.

- Computer/Internet use ranks third among programs and services that library users are most likely to use. Moreover, computers and technology are more likely to be used frequently by those in Ward 8, African-American residents, Hispanic residents, and those with young children.
- When asked what they wished the library offered more of, 11 percent of African-American men and 19 percent of African-American women stated more computers and better Internet, compared to only 2 percent of Caucasian men and 7 percent of Caucasian women.

- 43 percent of library users stated they rely on both the physical branch and online services when they use the library.

For staff, technology and innovation services are a top priority.

- When asked to envision the programs and services that make up the library in 2020, respondents ranked technology third behind information provider and literacy services.
- In a survey, 10 percent of staff respondents chose technology as their vision for the library in 2020 and agreed that the library should allow community members to have easy access to computers, digital video and audio collections, and other resources they may not have.

Goal 3: Strong Communities

Many residents look to the library as a main source of information.

- Access to research and information ranks second among programs and services that library users are most likely to use, just behind books.
- Although 81 percent of residents say they look elsewhere for their information needs, residents in Ward 7 and Ward 8, seniors, older and African-American women, and residents with a disability are disproportionately likely to bring up the library as their main source of information.

Residents and staff envision the library in the future as a space that offers classes for all ages, multilingual resources and other programs and activities that offer learning and growth opportunities to build stronger communities.

- Participants at the community meetings emphasized that the library should promote lifelong learning and should be a place where people of all ages come to learn and be enriched. They urged DCPL to provide increased guidance to users on resources for life skills, jobs and education so that the library remains a vital resource for all communities. For example, one person stated that their branch currently does not offer much help with certification programs.
- Web survey respondents favored adult continuing education and lifelong learning programs like computer training and language courses.
- Adult continuing education programs top the list of most desired services, along with more traditional access to books, for non-users. 38 percent mentioned adult continuing education and lifelong learning as programs they would be most likely to access.

Staff and partners place a high priority on extending services and programs to underserved groups in the community.

- In focus groups, staff indicated that they desire to better serve certain populations, including people with disabilities (20 responses), seniors (7 responses) and the homeless (4 responses).
- Also in focus groups, staff placed an emphasis on using existing physical space more effectively to make it more comfortable for new and growing populations.

- Library partners and community organizations, service providers and agencies indicated in focus groups that the library should serve as an extension of the community. They see an opportunity to build stronger partnerships with local organizations and envision the library as a community-connector that directs people to the information and resources these organizations provide.

Goal 4: Local History and Culture

Cultural programming and local D.C. history remain important priorities for library users and non-users alike.

- While residents heavily rely on their neighborhood libraries, many stated that they are willing to travel for certain programs and services. 44 percent would travel to another library for cultural programs and literary events, while 38 percent would travel for local D.C. history.
- Cultural programs are among the top 3 most desired services (along with access to books and lifelong learning programs) among non-users of the library.
- Cultural programs such as music, film and dance ranked third in priority for web survey respondents.
- 30 percent of web survey respondents who are non-users of the library indicated that they would be likely to use programs and services related to local D.C. history.

Residents envision the library as a place where people can come to spend time, see their neighbors, and have a sense of community.

- Community meeting participants emphasized the need for movie and game nights, author talks, and lectures and events that bring in local leaders. They believe that the library is a place to bring the immediate community together to discuss issues important to them.

Goal 5: Stewardship

Lack of awareness about existing programs and services is a big issue, especially for non-users and newer residents. Even regular library users stated they were not very familiar with the complete range of current library offerings.

- Only 23 percent of users indicated they are very familiar with the library's offerings, while just 12 percent of non-users said this. Beyond knowing about the library's collection of books and the spaces to study and research, most residents indicated they are frankly unaware of a host of services in which they may otherwise be interested.
- 24 percent of web survey respondents stated that they don't use the library more frequently because they don't feel like they know what services are offered. Furthermore, non-users mentioned extended hours, cultural and children's programming, and adult continuing education classes as programs and services that would increase the likelihood of them visiting the library. Because these programs and services already exist, it is clear that the bigger issue is a lack of awareness.

- Participants at all community meetings, at Tenley-Friendship, Shaw and Anacostia branches, mentioned increasing marketing and communication to reach a wider audience. Many stated that they were unaware of the library's offerings and shared the belief that their communities would be more motivated to use the library's programs services if they were better informed.

Staff identify professional development as a necessary priority for achieving the library's 2020 vision.

- 83 percent of staff surveyed shared the belief that enhanced staff skills are among the top five assets needed, while 59 percent said new staffing and service models.

For library users and staff, having access to a physical branch and maintaining flexible spaces remains important. They also believe that offering services outside the library branch will likely have a positive effect on use of the library's services.

- 79 percent of library users said they attend the library branch closest to where they live, rather than their place of work or child's school. Furthermore, close to half of residents only use their physical branch, 43 percent use both the physical branch and online services, and only nine percent use online services only.
- Access to comfortable spaces was favored among web survey respondents. When asked to name one thing that the library could offer to make them use it more often, 10 percent of non-users stated "cozier spaces."
- In focus groups, staff emphasized the importance of maintaining flexible physical spaces. Many stated that the library should be able to serve as a meeting space for people to work, socialize and study, event space, and as a comfortable and safe space for shelter.

Residents would like to see the library partner more often with local organizations and offer services outside the library branch, and they believe that doing so will likely have a positive effect on use of the library's services.

- For 42 percent of residents, offering services outside the library branch would increase the likelihood of them using the library's services. Moreover, 53 percent of Hispanic residents, 53 percent of non-college graduates, and 50 percent of African-American residents said they are especially likely to increase their usage of the library based on its expansion into the community, such as offering services at senior centers, recreation centers and other locations outside of the branch.