

Township of Russell Public Library - « Planning to Serve You Better » 2012 User and Non-User Survey Results: Summary and Analysis

SUMMARY

The « *Planning to Serve You Better* » survey (« *Planifier pour mieux vous servir* ») was completed from September 14th to October 6th, 2012 and was aimed at both users and non-users of the Township of Russell Public Library. The survey asked questions to discover what library programs & services residents use, how satisfied they are, why some residents do not use the library, and what perceptions residents have of the library. A total of 409 residents completed the survey: 79% users (had used the library in the last 12 months) and 21% non-users. The results of the survey have been used for the strategic planning process.

There was a lot of positive feedback from respondents. Library staff was praised repeatedly and the majority of respondents indicated they were very satisfied with the current programs and services (overall satisfaction level at 4.5 or 90%). The following issues were however identified as possible areas where improvements were recommended: Embrun Branch facilities, opening hours, availability of a meeting space in each branch (even if after opening hours), wider selection of books and eBooks, wider range of programming and better advertising of programs and services.

The following elements were also noted:

- A significantly higher percentage of French respondents say they use the library less now than in the past.
- The four main reasons non-users do not use the library are: too busy, new residents that have not had the time to check out the library, use of another library and buy own books and DVDs.
- The perception that users and non-users have of the library is quite similar in many aspects except that more non-users don't have the library at the "top of their mind" and believe that they can find all the information at the library on the Internet while more users think you can measure the success of a community by the quality of its public library.

Bibliothèque publique du canton de Russell - « Planifier pour mieux vous servir » Sondage 2012 auprès des utilisateurs et non-utilisateurs : sommaire et analyse

RÉSUMÉ

Le sondage "Planifier pour mieux vous servir" (« *Planning to serve you better* ») a été effectué du 14 septembre au 6 octobre 2012 auprès des utilisateurs et non-utilisateurs de la Bibliothèque publique du canton de Russell. Le sondage voulait savoir quels services et programmes de la bibliothèque sont utilisés par les résidents, combien satisfaits ils sont, pourquoi certains résidents n'utilisent pas la bibliothèque et quelles sont les perceptions des gens sur leur bibliothèque. Un total de 409 résidents ont complété le sondage: 79% d'utilisateurs (ont utilisé la bibliothèque durant les 12 derniers mois) et 21% de non-utilisateurs. Les résultats du sondage ont été utilisés pour le processus de planification stratégique.

Les répondants ont eu de nombreux commentaires positifs sur la bibliothèque. Le personnel de la bibliothèque a fait l'objet de commentaires élogieux de la part de plusieurs répondants et la majorité ont indiqué qu'ils étaient très satisfaits des programmes et services actuels (taux de satisfaction générale de 4.5 ou 90%). Les éléments suivants ont toutefois été identifiés comme des domaines où des améliorations étaient souhaitables : installations de la succursale Embrun, heures d'accueil, disponibilité de salles de rencontre dans chacune des succursales (même après les heures d'ouverture), une plus grande variété de documents imprimés et électroniques, une plus grande variété d'activités et une meilleure promotion des programmes et des services.

On peut également noter les éléments suivants:

- Un pourcentage plus élevé de répondants francophones ont indiqué qu'ils utilisaient moins la bibliothèque que par le passé.
- Les quatre principales raisons données par les répondants qui n'utilisent pas la bibliothèque sont : trop occupé, résident nouvellement arrivé, utilisation d'une autre bibliothèque et achat de ses propres livres et DVDs.
- La perception que les utilisateurs et non-utilisateurs ont de la bibliothèque est très semblable sous plusieurs aspects sauf que les non-utilisateurs n'ont pas la bibliothèque en tête et estiment qu'ils peuvent trouver sur l'Internet toute l'information disponible à la bibliothèque alors que la majorité des utilisateurs croient qu'on peut mesurer le succès d'une collectivité par la qualité de sa bibliothèque publique.

Survey analysis

by Ciara O'Shea, Library Intern

Introduction

In 2012, The Township of Russell Public Library started a strategic planning process to identify priorities and develop a five-year strategic plan. As part of the process, the library undertook to survey the population of the Township on their use and perception of the library. The survey was aimed at both users and non-users.

The population of the Township of Russell is around 15 247 (2011 Census). The objective of the survey was to reach 300 users and 100 non-users. During the three weeks (September 14 to October 6, 2012), 444 respondents started the survey and 409 residents completed the survey (completion rate of 92 %): 257 were completed in English, and 187 were completed in French. In total, 341 were users and 90 were non-users.

Survey Format

The survey was designed by library senior staff with the assistance of a public library intern. The Strategic Planning consultant also provided advice to streamline and improve the survey questions. The survey included both closed questions and open-ended questions giving respondents a chance to comment on their responses or on other issues not covered in the survey. The online version of the survey was developed using *SurveyMonkey* and printed copies were also available for respondents who preferred a print version. A link to the survey was provided on the home page of the library's website and staff at both branches were asked to encourage clients to complete the survey either from their home or at the library (a computer station was provided in each branch to access the survey).

To reach non-users as well as those who use the library less frequently, notices were published in two local papers, *Le Reflet* and *The Villager*, as well as in various church bulletins. Local community groups were also contacted. In addition, the library intern attended various community events including the *Terry Fox Run* and la *Journée pour la culture* to reach non users and went to local businesses to solicit responses, or leave posters. Printed copies of the survey were also left at a few local seniors residences. The survey attempted to reach a variety of residents (aged 18 and over) in every part of the Township.

Results

The overall response to the survey was fairly positive. There was a lot of praise for the new library facilities in Russell and for the staff. However, there were a few issues that were identified as areas where improvements and change should be prioritized.

Embrun Branch Facilities

Compared to all the elements of the satisfaction level question, satisfaction with the Embrun branch facilities had the lowest score: 2.78 (56%) out of a possible 5. In comparison, the Russell branch facilities had a satisfaction level of 4.68 out of 5. A common refrain was that the Embrun branch is inadequate, small, noisy and cramped since the move from its former location in City Hall. According to respondents, this change means two things: the school library does not exist anymore and both children and adults now have a smaller selection of books and materials. Also, this new location is very noisy because it is in a school; the noise levels go up at recess or when classes visit the library. When classes are in the library, the one member of staff at the desk is often overwhelmed, which also means that adult patrons find it hard to get service at those times.

Some users indicated for example that the one change that would most improve the library would be to « Avoir une bibliothèque indépendante d'une école comme à Russell », « to have a proper library in Embrun, one that is not NOISY and bigger. I think we pay taxes in Embrun the same as they do in Russell » and « un nouveau local car à l'école c'est trop petit, c'est difficile pour le stationnement, c'est trop petit entre les allées ». Some respondents even provided suggestions for a new location.

An important aspect of that issue is also that users in Embrun recognize that the Russell branch has much better physical facilities, with space for reading, working and studying. Since almost all of the French collection is in Embrun and almost all of the English collection is in Russell, patrons who have the most issues are those who mainly speak and read in French. There are concerns that this is an inequity around language with one respondent saying « Je veux une bibliothèque française comme celle de Russell qui ont seulement des livres anglais. On paie des taxes à Embrun autant qu'à Russell », another saying « La communauté francophone d'Embrun mérite une meilleure solution! On ne devrait pas avoir moins que les gens de Russell. » Another respondent uses his one word to describe the future of the library as being « equity » while another describes the current state of affairs as « unfair ». Finally, one user says, « As a resident of Embrun, I feel we are second class citizens. Russell has a beautiful new library, new arena, curling rink and Fire Hall. We have all the old facilities. The Embrun Library is not a relaxing place to go, kids running around everywhere, extremely hot to be in, can't even hear yourself think let alone talk to the staff. Extremely disappointing to see how Embrun citizens are treated. »

According to respondents, another issue with the Embrun facilities is the security of children attending the school. Many users and non-users indicated they are concerned for the children who attend the school since anyone can enter the school without being questioned. One respondent said « Je trouve, côté sécurité pas vraiment pour les enfants. Tout le monde peut entrer à l'école La Croisée, justement à cause de la bibliothèque - à l'école St-Jean il faut sonner avant d'entrer. ». Another says,

« Aussi, est-ce vraiment sécuritaire d'avoir un endroit complètement ouvert au public entier de la communauté (la bibliothèque) dans le même endroit qu'une école, tout deux ouverts pendant les mêmes heures d'ouverture, etc.??? A-t-on vraiment besoin que tous les fins et les fous du village puissent venir se promener côte à côte avec de jeunes élèves dans une même bibliothèque??? L'école ne doit-elle pas être en meilleur contrôle de qui est sur ses lieux pour mieux assurer la sécurité de ses élèves. »

Some parents however stated that they are very happy that their child who attends that school has immediate access to the library because it encourages a love of reading and facilitates access to books.

Opening Hours

Many respondents had issues with the opening hours. Mothers with young children would like more mornings, other patrons mentioned « more evening hours » while others mentioned that Sundays would be a good day to be open for « studying ». One patron mentioned that he would appreciate « hours that aren't necessarily much longer, but more stable » Many users have difficulty with remembering the hours, and some mentioned that the library should not be closed on Saturdays during the Summer since that is still the only time they can use the library.

Meeting Space

Many respondents mentioned that they would love a meeting space. One said : « il pourrait même y avoir un petit café - lieu de rencontre pour échange de groupes de lecture.... » Many patrons would like for the space to feel more like a bookstore with a lot of seating and space to connect with others. Another mentioned that the Russell Branch does have space that should be available for seminars after the library is closed.

OTHER ISSUES

Collections

A common refrain was that patrons would like more books, especially new reads, French books and eBooks. One patron noted: « Please continue to expand your collections as much as possible. I realize that space limitations and budgets dictate limits on the expansion of your collection, but through prudent ordering and wise use of available resources, library staff can maximize the growth of your two branches and achieve optimal performance based on the resources provided by taxpayers through the township's government.». Another patron noted : « La bibliothèque doit prioriser et continuer à tenir compte des francophones de la communauté en offrant encore plus de livres et de documents en français. » Some respondents said they would also like to be able to access the eBooks at other libraries – as this is not possible, it seems necessary to better educate clients and residents on the different issues affecting the availability and circulation of eBooks at the library.

Also a few users mentioned that the budget for books should be increased, including one patron who said: « I see library services as an essential municipal service, and feel it should be funded as such. » Another said: « Staff really know their business but they need more resources to get more books. » Finally, one respondent said « Il serait bon d'avoir un plus gros budget afin d'être en mesure d'acheter un plus grand volume de nouveautés et il est primordial de déménager dans un endroit plus grand afin d'avoir un plus grand choix. »

Programming

Many respondents had suggestions for extra programming such as « Introduce National Geographic movies on Saturday mornings or Scientific Discoveries for children or adults » and « Sunday morning lecture series » which implies that they would like more activities in the library. Many patrons mentioned that they would like more adult programming, including an « Adult Summer Reading club » or courses on « genealogical research. ».

Another programming suggestion was for more children activities and for a wider range of ages. One parent mentioned: « As a parent, I would love to see more programming for children and youth that is outside the 'normal scope' of a typical library... homework clubs, comic book book clubs, computer classes, etc things that reflect the current realities of our kids and that would engage them in this wonderful centre in new and creative ways. » One non-user mentioned that he had stopped using the library because there were no activities for his 14 month old. Instead, he got a membership at another library so that his child would be able to participate in activities for his age group.

Finally, many non-users of the library mentioned that they had stopped using the library once their children had gotten older. Obviously, the library is being perceived by them as mainly a service for children.

Advertising and Community Outreach

Various respondents offered suggestions of things that are already available at the library including eBooks and programming for young children. It seems these residents were not aware that the library already offered these services and activities. Various non-users also mentioned that advertising might make them use the library more, while one user noted « Need more advertisement of website (I didn't know there was one) .» Another patron said: « it would also be nice if there was more awareness efforts of existing services, meetings and gatherings, etc. there - if it exists it simply isn't easily seen - maybe a large board of activities behind the main desk instead of just the wall/windows to behind. Kind of like when you go to a cafe or restaurant, they have a large board with 'specials' - simply explained and easy to see! If the library aspires to be a social hub they need to advertise themselves more - as well as host visible activities there to draw more people there for reasons other than just books! The new library has a lot of space - so there is opportunity to have events, etc there ».

Other Comments

« Very very long wait times for interlibrary loans - sometimes never getting filled without communication as to why. At least letting know approximate wait time via online account. Often my interloan requests aren't even noted on my online account. Very frustrating. »

« I would definitely change the policy of charging for use of the computers. That policy is an insult to taxpayers who have already paid for the purchase of the computers. If this policy is expanded, next the library will start charging to borrow books as well. »

« An email notification system for when your books are due »

« Signing out books takes forever now, more work for the librarians/book, more wait for the client »

« I use the Ottawa library to access business courses - would be nice if they were available here »

« Que le temps d'attente quand un livre est disponible soit moins long. »

« Plus d'espace entre les rangs des livres. Ayant des problèmes avec mes genoux, je ne peux me pencher pour explorer les livres du bas. Espaces de stationnement réservés pour la bibliothèque. Porte d'entrée directe à la bibliothèque. »

« Améliorer la quantité de livres en français pour les enfants dans la succursale de Russell. C'est pour cela que je vais seulement à Embrun malgré mon lieu de résidence à Russell. »

« I think the website could be designed better and more user friendly. Account login could be a lot easier to find. »

« Ottawa Library has a "book-on-the-go" program where children's books are put into knapsacks for quick checkouts for busy families. Age appropriate, pre-selected and even bilingual bags. Useful for quick stop-in for working parents. »

« I did not know the library had small business resources? Will have to check that out - I am starting a small business... »

« More full time staff that is constant so they know clients likes/dislikes, longer hours for working people, plan the layout of the building better for future growth so it can expand properly without compromising the airflow and quantity of books allowed in the building in the future. »

« It would be nice if there were a bus once in awhile. Since the library's move in Russell it is no longer within easy walking distance. »

« I believe the meaning and representation of "public library" should change; not just a place for homework, photocopies, free books for kids and free Dvds. It should be an experience, an environment where people are attracted to go spend time and be inspired. It shouldn't just be for soccer moms and 8 yr olds. Some adults would also like to have a comfortable, less juvenile, modern place to relax, and read a good book. »

« Let the library be a library and leave the local language disputes out of it!!! »

« Lastly, I wonder if the Library has considered (or in fact has) approaching the local homeschooling community regarding running either fee based Co-Ops or fee based workshops on specific topics? Could be both community building and revenue generating! »

« Je trouve que la bibliothèque du canton de Prescott-Russell est un lieu où les différentes générations approfondissent l'apprentissage de la langue française. Elle encourage les gens à lire & à écrire en français. C'est une source d'enrichissement pour nos élèves qui seront la génération de demain. »