

WHAT IS A PUBLIC LIBRARY... AND WHY DO PUBLIC LIBRARIES STILL MATTER?

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A service response is what a library does for, or offers to, the public in an effort to meet a set of well-defined community needs.

THE PLA SERVICE RESPONSES

Be an Informed Citizen: Local, National, and World Affairs Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels, and to fully participate in community decision-making.

Build Successful Enterprises: Business and Non-Profit Support Business owners and non-profit organization directors and their managers will have the resources they need to develop and maintain strong, viable organizations.

Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness Residents will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

Create Young Readers: Early Literacy Preschool children will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn to read, write, and listen.

Discover Your Roots: Genealogy and Local History Residents and visitors will have the resources they need to connect the past with the present through their family histories and to understand the history and traditions of the community.

Express Creativity: Create and Share Content Residents will have the services and support they need to express themselves by creating original print, video, audio, or visual content in a real-world or online environment.

Get Facts Fast: Ready Reference Residents will have someone to answer their questions on a wide array of topics of personal interest.

Know Your Community: Community Resources and Services Residents will have a central source for information about the wide variety of programs, services, and activities provided by community agencies and organizations.

Learn to Read and Write: Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy Adults and teens will have the support they need to improve their literacy skills in order to meet their personal goals and fulfill their responsibilities as parents, citizens, and workers.

Make Career Choices: Job and Career Development Adults and teens will have the skills and resources they need to identify career opportunities that suit their individual strengths and interests.

Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices Residents will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits, and alternatives before making decisions that affect their lives.

Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure Residents will have materials and programs that excite their imaginations and provide pleasurable reading, viewing, and listening experiences.

Succeed in School: Homework Help Students will have the resources they need to succeed in school.

Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information: Information Fluency Residents will know when they need information to resolve an issue or answer a question and will have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information to meet their needs.

Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Welcome to the United States: Services for New Immigrants New immigrants will have information on citizenship, English Language Learning (ELL), employment, public schooling, health and safety, available social services, and any other topics that they need to participate successfully in American life.

THE ELEMENTS OF A SERVICE RESPONSE

Title

Description

Suggested Target Audiences

Typical Services and Programs in Libraries that Select this as a Priority

Potential Partners

Policy Implications

Critical Resources

Staff (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities)

Collection (Print, Media, and Electronic Resources)

Facility (Space, Furniture, and Equipment)

Technology (Hardware, Software, Networks, and Telecommunications)

Possible Measures

Number of Users

User Perceptions

User Outcomes

Units of Service Delivered

BE AN INFORMED CITIZEN: LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND WORLD AFFAIRS

Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy; fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels; and fully participate in community decision-making.

Suggested Target Audiences

- adults
- teens
- new voters

Typical Services and Programs in Libraries That Select This as a Priority

- Provide information on issues of public policy.
- Convene meetings to provide an opportunity for people to discuss community issues.
- Convene meetings to provide an opportunity for people to discuss national and international issues.
- Develop and maintain a Web page with links to local, state, and federal information resources.
- Host regularly scheduled open discussions with elected officials (local, state, and federal), and make the discussions available as podcasts or downloadable digital videos.
- Provide paper and electronic copies of local information, such as annual reports from city agencies, environmental reports, revised population estimates from the city planning office, and city council meeting minutes.
- Participate in blogs that focus on local issues.
- Present programs in partnership with local and national organizations that promote democracy and civic involvement.
- Operate a community television station and broadcast community meetings.
- Provide tax forms and volunteer tax advisers.
- Register voters or provide voter registration forms.

Potential Partners

- AARP tax advisors
- board of elections
- chamber of commerce
- city council
- county commission
- League of Women Voters
- other city or county departments

Policy Implications

Meeting Rooms

- meeting room use by outside groups
- meeting room use for partisan events
- meeting room use for issue-based programs
- meeting room use after library hours
- meeting room fees

Programs in the Library

- co-sponsorship of programs

Web Page

- criteria for linking to sites sponsored by advocacy groups

Critical Resources

Staff (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities)

- Staff are knowledgeable about local government structures and elected and appointed officials.
- Staff are knowledgeable about issues of local concern.
- Staff are knowledgeable about resources that provide information about local, state, national, and international public policy issues.
- Staff can facilitate meetings.
- Staff can establish partnerships with local or national organizations that promote civic engagement.
- Staff can record podcasts or digital videocasts and make them available for download.

Collection (Print, Media, and Electronic Resources)

- Constitutional law
- current events
- environmental issues
- globalization
- grassroots organizing
- local, state, and national government
- municipal finance
- political ideologies
- political process
- politics
- public administration
- public policy issues

Facility (Space, Furniture, and Equipment)

- meeting space
- equipment to record podcasts/videocasts

Technology (Hardware, Software, Networks, and Telecommunication)

- public access computers, audio headsets, and printers

Possible Measures

Number of Users

- number of people attending programs on topics related to local, national, and world affairs
- percent of people who indicate on a survey that they use the library to become an informed citizen

User Perceptions

- percent of users surveyed who respond that:
 - The library's collection of materials on local, national, and world affairs is very good or excellent.
 - The information assistance they receive from staff when looking for information or asking a reference question is very good or excellent.

User Outcomes

- number/percent of specified participants who become more actively involved as citizens
- number/percent of specified participants who gain a sense of community

Units of Service Delivered

- circulation of materials in subject areas associated with local, national, and world affairs
- number of programs offered on the topics related to the local, national, and world affairs
- number of hits on the library's "Be an Informed Citizen" Web page
- number of podcasts/videocasts recorded and the number of times each was downloaded

TELLING PEOPLE WHY LIBRARIES STILL MATTER

Marketing is the processes of finding out what customers want, developing products that meet customer demand, making those products accessible and easy to use, and then finding effective ways to be sure that customers know that the products are available. Marketing experts call this *The Four Ps: Product, Place, Price, Promotion*.

PRODUCT – IT ALL STARTS WITH THE SERVICES YOU OFFER

- The service responses will help you work with your users to define the services they want and need.
- It isn't enough to select your service priorities. You have to actually change your activities to support your priorities.
- Evaluate your activities regularly to be sure that they remain effective.

PLACE – IT MATTERS WHEN AND WHERE YOU MAKE YOUR SERVICES AVAILABLE

- The needs to be library open when users are free to use it. That typically means evenings and weekends.
- Services should be offered in the most convenient locations. If your system has multiple buildings, think carefully about which services you offer in each site.
- Many users prefer a virtual library environment.
- Not all services need to be offered in the library. Many programs are more effective when offered in non-library locations.

PRICE – YOUR USERS MEASURE THE COST OF YOUR SERVICES IN THE AMOUNT OF THE TIME AND EFFORT REQUIRED TO USE THEM AS WELL AS THE FINANCIAL COST

- People are busy and getting busier all of the time. They aren't able or willing to spend a lot of time or effort to get services, particularly when similar services are easily available from other sources.
- Continue to look for new and more efficient ways to deliver services.
- Collaborate with other organizations. It will save time and money.
- Be prepared to talk about the value of the services the library offers to community residents. In difficult economic times, library managers have to be ready to justify services to funders and the public.

PROMOTION – TARGET YOUR MESSAGES

- Communicate with community partners and supporters regularly.
- Be sure that elected and government officials understand the services the library offers.
- Messages designed to appeal to "everyone" are rarely heard/read by anyone. Be sensitive to cultures, languages, and age levels.
- Use multiple formats to deliver your message.