IMPACT Survey Results

Anytown Public Library

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Foreword

Thank you for participating in the IMPACT web survey! From March through June, 2009, over 400 public libraries across the United States participated in the web survey, with a result of over 45,000 completed responses from library patrons and public access computing users. The data have provided rich and valuable insights about how library patrons use public access computers, wireless Internet connections, and other related library resources and services and the impact it has on their lives. The following is a report of the results we gathered from patrons of the Anytown Public Library. We hope you will find this information useful for internal decision-making, demonstrating the value of offering such services to stakeholders and elected officials, and for advocacy efforts with the public.

The implementation of the U.S. IMPACT web survey was the first time public libraries were enlisted in a nationwide effort to gather patron-level data. We are grateful to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services for their support of this effort. We also greatly appreciate your library's participation in this study, and hope that you find this report helpful as you continue your library advocacy efforts in your community. We invite you to learn about the overall research findings in the project reports: *The Users and Uses of Public Access Technology in Public Libraries* and *Creating Value with Public Access Technology: How Library Policies and Services Affect Patron Outcomes*.

Sincerely,

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About this report

The IMPACT Survey research project and associated survey instruments were designed around a *situated logic model* which contextualizes public access computing (PAC) resources and services within seven domains: civic engagement, eGovernment, education, health, employment and entrepreneurship, eCommerce, and social inclusion. In this framework, the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes associated with public access computing are connected with broad-level public policy goals. An example of this connection is illustrated in Figure 1, where measures related to using PAC for job-seeking are linked to workforce development goals.
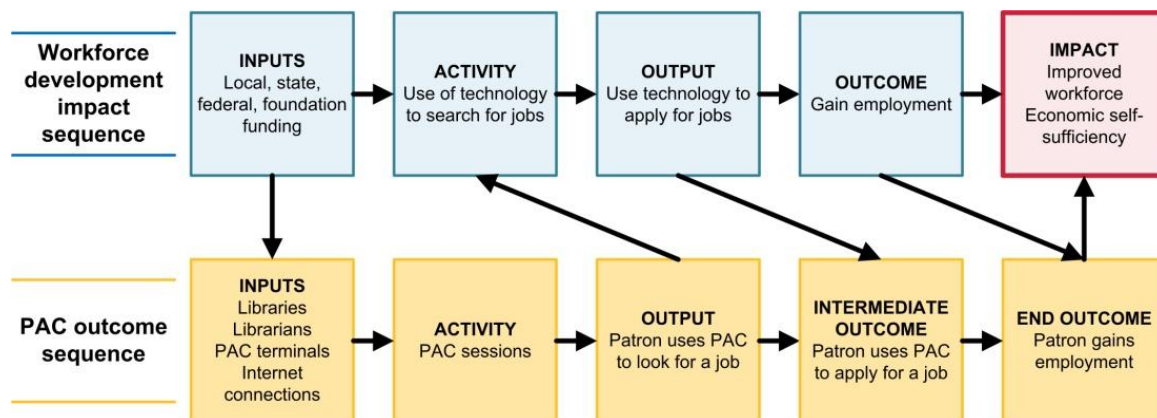
Figure 1: A sample situated logic model

The situated logic model is a useful tool for libraries to evaluate how the library's computing resources are being used and also to show policy makers and funders how computing and networking resources and services contribute to public policy goals. The data in this report can be used to understand the types of activities library patrons engage in with public computers and the outcomes of that use. It can also be used over time to track how changes in resources, services, and policies affect outcomes and can help focus the library's resources on carrying out those activities with high value in the library's community.

The web survey was conducted in public library systems selected using a stratified probability proportionate to size (PPS) sampling procedure, with the measure of size being the population of the library service area (LSA) as reported in the 2006 *Public Libraries Data Files.* The probability proportionate to size sample was necessary to ensure that the survey was deployed in communities with populations large enough to yield the target number of completed surveys. The sample stratified these libraries between self-representing libraries[1], single-outlet systems, and multiple-outlet systems, and an oversample of libraries serving fewer than 5,000.

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[1] The self-representing strata threshold equals 75 percent of the sum of the legal service area populations divided by 580 library systems (number of sampled libraries not including the small library over-sample).

The following results are from patrons of the Anytown Public Library; while they are not generalizable to the library's service population, they can be used to understand the ways in which patrons are using PAC in the library. Appendix A contains tables reporting the national weighted averages as well as the actual (unweighted) results from other libraries participating in the web survey; these results are organized by library size to aid in comparisons between peer libraries.

The IMPACT Survey website contains additional tools and suggestions for using the information contained in this report and to communicate with the public, policymakers, and funders about the value of PAC resources and services, including examples of how the data might be used in presentations to policymakers, samples of factsheets that could be used for generating financial support for PAC resources, and short summaries of benefits of PAC in specific domains that could be used to gain support from sector-specific agencies. Please visit http://tascha.uw.edu/usimpact to download these materials.

Overall results

We received 214 completed survey responses from patrons of the Anytown Public Library. Figure 2 shows the concentration of responses by the ZIP codes reported by survey respondents.
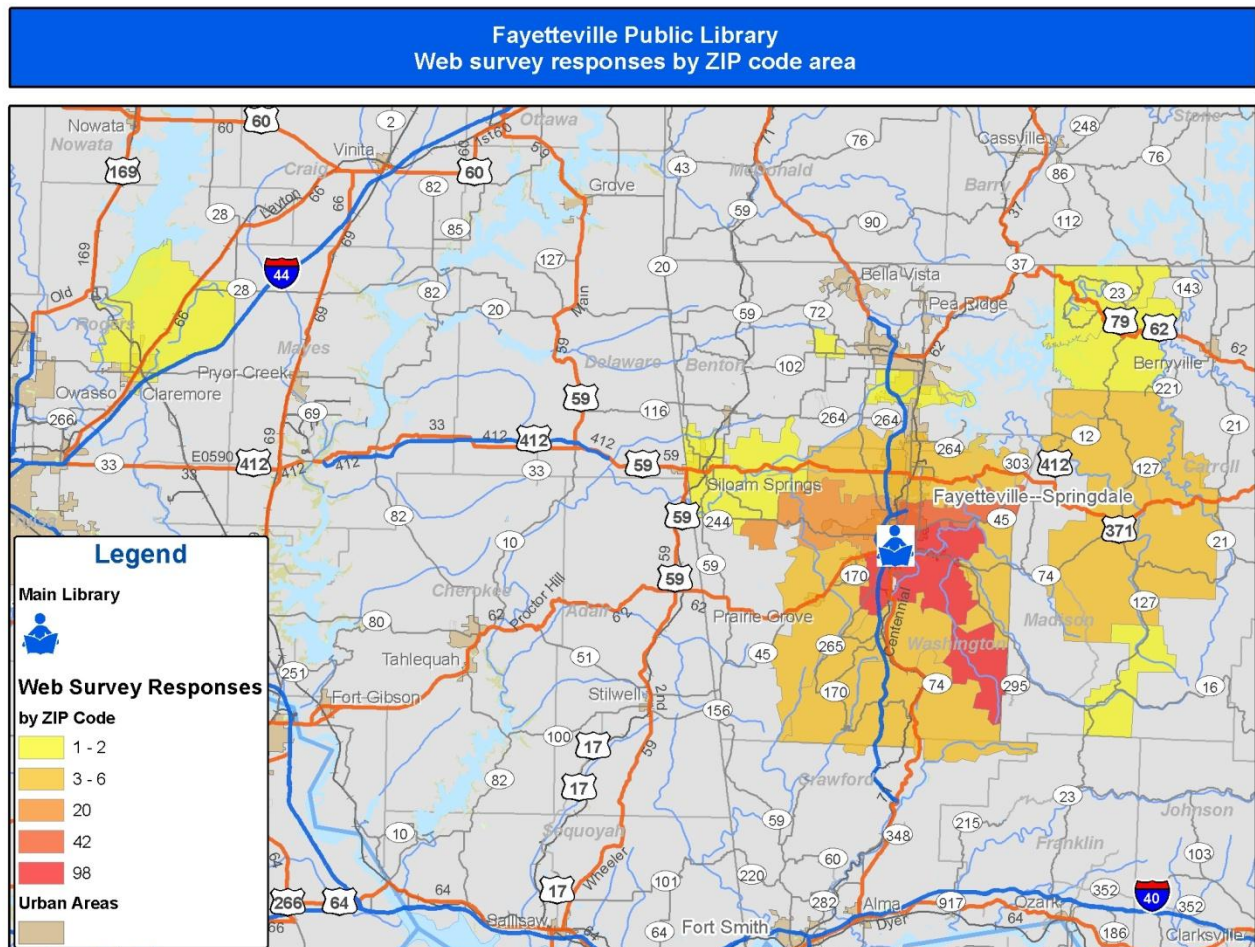

Figure 2: ZIP codes of web survey respondents

Library use

 All but 1 survey respondent had visited the library in the past 12 months. Of those who did,

- 101 (47%) visited the library once a week or more frequently;
- 89 (42%) visited the library about 1-3 times a month;
- 23 (11%) visited the library less than once a month.

Accessing library resources through the library website

Survey respondents were asked how they access library resources available through the library website. About **92% (197) of respondents used computers in the library to access online resources** such as the

catalog, placing holds or interlibrary loan requests, or to access the library's subscription databases. Of those who reported using library computers for these purposes,

- 59 (30%) did so once a week or more frequently;
- 85 (43%) did so about 1-3 times a month;
- 53 (27%) did so less than once a month.

Over **90% (193) of respondents accessed library resources remotely through the library's website <u>from outside the library</u>** (e.g. from home, school, or work). Of those who accessed library resources this way

- 49% (94) did so once a week or more frequently;
- 32% (61) did so about 1-3 times a month;
- 20% (38) did so less than once a month.

Finally, 7% (14) reported they had used a handheld device such as an iPhone or Blackberry to access library resources through the library website.

Use of public access computers or wireless network

Overall, **86% of survey respondents had used a public access computer or wireless connection on their own computer to access the Internet**. Using either means of access qualified respondents as *public access technology <u>users</u>.*

When asked specifically if they had **used a computer in the library to access the Internet, 78% (166) reported that they had done so,** with frequencies as follows:

- 25% (42) once a week or more frequently;
- 25% (42) about 1-3 times a month;
- 49% (82) less than once a month.

Wireless use was less frequently reported: **47% (100) of respondents had used the library's wireless network on their own computers to access the Internet**. Of those who did,

- 15% (15) used the library's wireless network once a week or more frequently;
- 23% (23) used the library's wireless network about 1-3 times a month;
- 62% (62) used the library's wireless network less than once a month.

Most survey respondents (91%) reported having regular access to a computer and the Internet somewhere other than the library.[2] Of those with alternative access, the reported locations were as follows:

- 91% (176) at home;
- 49% (95) at work;

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[2] Some respondents reported having access to computers and the Internet at more than one location.

- 18% (35) at school;
- 2% (4) at a community center;
- 8% (16) someplace else.

One important reason for using computers in the library when alternative access is available is while traveling. Of the users, **32% (59) reported that they had used a library computer or wireless Internet connection while out-of-town for business or pleasure**.

In addition to use while traveling, the IMPACT Survey main findings included several other important reasons why respondents with alternative access use networked computers in the public library:

- **Lack of access to high speed Internet at home.** The library Internet connection is used to download large files or access websites that require a high speed connection.
- **During gaps in access**, such as when moving to a new location or during power outages, or when a primary computer is broken or lacking in necessary software.
- **Household competition.** Especially among youth, competition with siblings or parents over a single household computer was a significant reason for using the library's computers when one was available at home.
- **For a change in scenery.** People who work at home sometimes use library computers and wireless Internet network to get out of the house. Job seekers also reported using computers in the library to maintain a normal schedule and stay connected to the community.
- **During lunch breaks or while out running errands.** Many users reported that they stop in to use the library's computers to check email, look up phone numbers or driving directions, or other quick tasks.
- **As a supplement to the library catalog** for such activities as looking up book reviews, reading lists, and other aids for selecting materials.

Help and training

Another reason why some patrons with alternative access use library computers may also have to do with help available at the library: **57% of PAC users reported having gotten technology help from library staff or volunteers**. As seen in Figure 3, of those receiving help, the most frequent types of help received were using computer equipment (44%) and printing or saving files (30%).
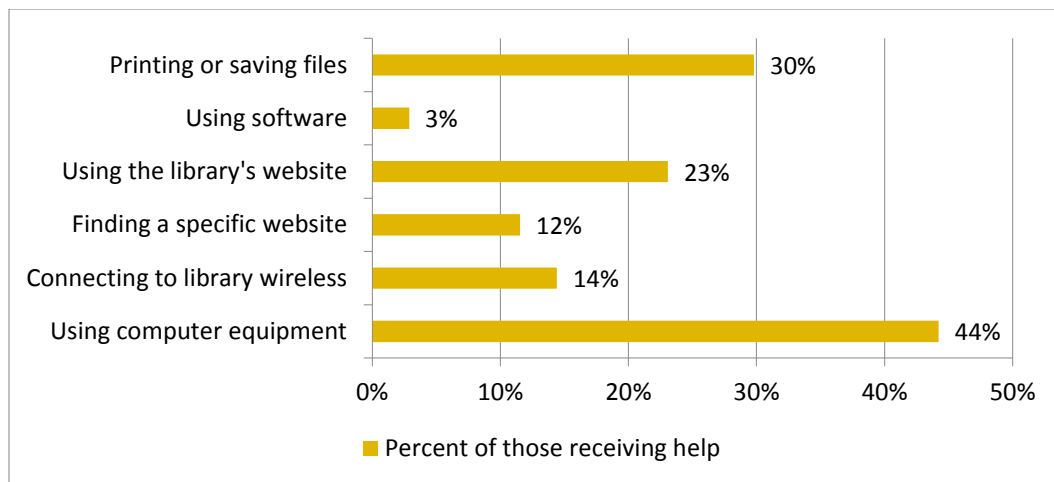
Figure 3: Type of help received from library staff or volunteers

Though not as frequently used as one-on-one help, **5% (9) of public computer users took advantage of computer-related training or classes at the library**. Note that this question was not asked of nonusers; the Anytown Public Library may have patrons who take computer-related training but otherwise do not use the library's computers.

Using the library's computers on behalf of others

While many people used computer services in the library primarily for themselves, **52% (95) of users find information or perform tasks for other people using library computers.** Thus the beneficiaries of library Internet access extend beyond that of the individual users. As seen in Figure 4, of users reporting using the library computers on behalf of others, the most frequent beneficiaries were family members (59%), followed by friends (54%).
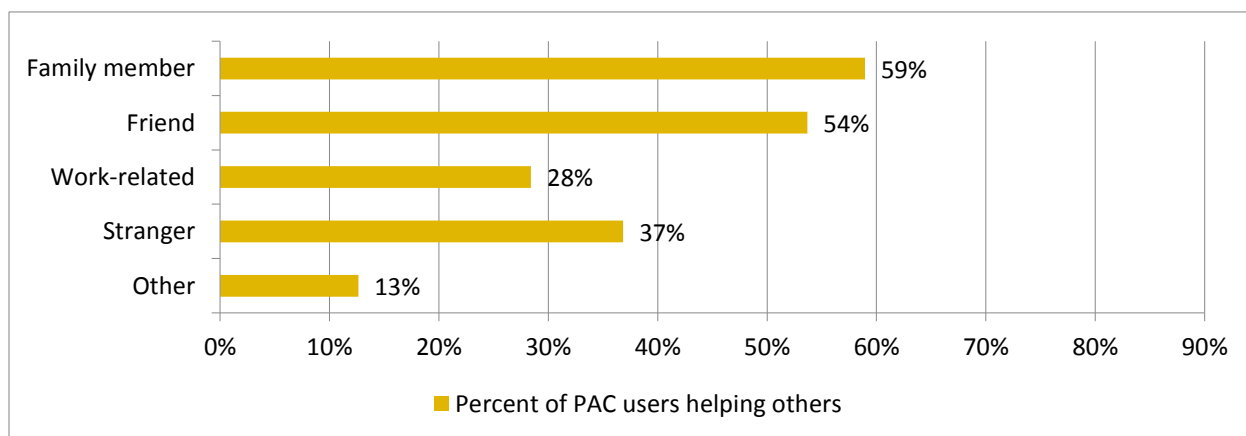
Figure 4: Relationship of those receiving help to computer user

Public access technology uses by activity area

Public access technology users use library computers and wireless Internet connections to satisfy their information needs and do tasks in a variety of areas. We chose seven specific activity areas as the focus of the IMPACT Survey initiative based on their relevance to public policy and public library goals: civic engagement, eGovernment, education, health, employment and entrepreneurship, eCommerce, and social inclusion. **The following detailed results reflect the activities of qualified public access technology users, defined as those respondents who indicated they had used the library's computers or wireless networks to access the Internet in the past year.**

As seen in Figure 5, library computer users from the Anytown Public Library showed the most activity in the areas of social inclusion, civic engagement, and education.
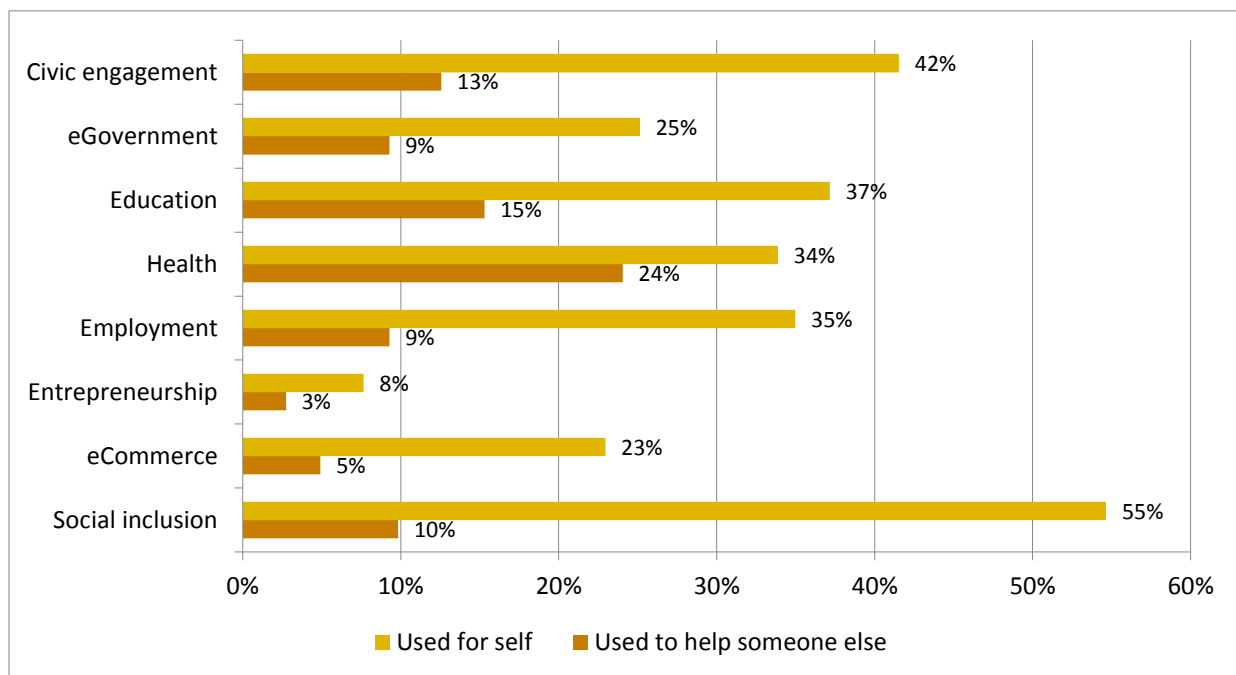
Figure 5: Public computer use by area for self and others

Civic engagement

Public libraries provide a venue for citizens to engage with their community by keeping track of local events, local causes and political candidates, and clubs and nonprofits in the area. Of the 76 users who reported they had used the Internet for civic engagement, the most frequently reported uses were to learn about a political activity or candidate or social cause and to keep up with news or current events (Table 1). In comments, many respondents who use the Internet for accessing news websites reported that they were doing so to keep up with international or hometown news.

Table 1: Civic Engagement

Used library computers to:	% of users	n
Keep up with news/current events	32%	58
Learn about political activity/candidate or social cause	32%	59
Get involved with political activity, candidate, or cause	**25%**	**46**
Make a donation to political candidate/cause	4%	8
Learned about starting club/non-profit	8%	15
Started club/non-profit	**2%**	**4**
Organized/managed club, civic/community/church group, or non-profit	15%	28
Scheduled meetings	**14%**	**25**
Promoted activities	**11%**	**21**
Looked for grants/funding for group	5%	10
Applied for grants/funding	**3%**	**6**
Received grants/funding	**1%**	**1**

Bolded rows indicate activities that show outcomes of other activities, i.e. users actually followed through on their earlier information seeking to accomplish a task.

eGovernment

Libraries play a significant role in connecting citizens with essential eGovernment services, such as filing tax returns, applying for Medicare or other benefits, and getting immigration forms. In emergencies, public libraries play a role helping the community find missing family, request aid, or file FEMA and insurance claims.

As seen in Table 2, the most frequent use in the eGovernment area was to learn about laws or regulations (17% of computer users), followed by seeking help from a government agency (16%), getting government forms (15%), and learning about government programs and services (14%).

Table 2: eGovernment

Used library computers to:	% of users	n
Seek help from government agency	16%	29
Got help needed	**14%**	**26**
Get government forms	15%	27
Submit forms online	**8%**	**14**
Learn about laws/regulations	17%	32
Learn about permits/licenses	11%	20
Apply for permit/license	**2%**	**4**
Seek legal assistance/advice	10%	19
Got legal help needed	**8%**	**14**
Learn about government programs/services	14%	25
Apply for government programs/services	**2%**	**3**

Education

Children, teenagers, and adults all benefit from educational services offered at the library, not just by having Internet access for class research, but also by participating in online classes, finding resources for homeschooling, and learning through educational games. From early literacy programs, homework help, and information on college admission, the library offers many educational opportunities to the community. Overall, 37% of the library computer users indicated they had used public library computers or Internet access for education or learning and 15% had done so on behalf of someone else.

Youth education

The IMPACT web survey collected responses from youth aged 14-18. **The most frequent youth educational uses of public access technology were to do online assignments and to do homework, with 2 out of 3 of youth users reporting having used the library's computers for these purposes** (Table 3).

Table 3: Youth education

Youth used library computers to:	% of youth users	n
Do homework	67%	2
Do online assignment/course	67%	2
Learn about colleges/admissions	0%	0
Apply for college	**0%**	**0**
Apply for financial aid	**0%**	**0**

Adult education

The most frequent (13% of adult users) educational use of library computers reported among adult users was to communicate with school or classmates. Of those looking for degree or certificate program information, the most common programs were at the graduate (71%) and baccalaureate (48%) levels; 3% used their library's computers to apply for a degree or certificate program. About 12% of adult computer users also indicated that they had used public library computers or Internet access to do coursework or online tutorials (Table 4).

Table 4: Adult education

Adults used library computers to:	% of adult users	n
Learn about degree/certificate program	12%	21
Apply for degree/certificate program	3%	5
Admitted to program	**1%**	**2**
Apply for financial aid	3%	5
Received financial aid	**1%**	**1**
Do online tutorial	9%	16
Take online class/workshop	6%	10
Complete coursework	12%	21
Communicate with school or classmates	13%	23

Health

Increasingly, information about health care providers and medical records is provided online. Survey respondents reported using the library Internet to research illnesses, insurance and health care providers, and online medical records. Meeting health-related information needs was the fifth most common use of library computers in the Anytown Public Library, with 34% of the users indicating they had used a public library computer or wireless Internet connection for this purpose.

The most frequent (25%) use of library computers for health and wellness needs was to learn about an illness, disease, or medical condition (Table 5). The second most frequent (20%) health-related use reported by computer users was to learn about diet or nutrition. **16% of all library computer users, or**

81% of those who learned about diet or nutrition using computers in the library, reported that this use helped them decide to make a change to their diets.

Table 5: Health and wellness		
Used library computers to:	% of users	n
Learn about illness, disease, or medical condition	25%	46
Learn about medical procedure	17%	32
Find online/in-person support groups for health need	7%	12
Learn about prescription/OTC drugs	14%	25
Made decision about prescription/OTC drug use	**9%**	**16**
Purchased drugs online	**1%**	**2**
Find out about diet/nutrition	20%	37
Made decision about diet changes	**16%**	**30**
Learn about exercise/fitness	15%	28
Made changes in exercise habits	**14%**	25
Find info about doctor/health care provider	8%	14
Made appointment	**3%**	**5**
Received needed care	**3%**	**5**
Find info on health insurance/drug discount program	5%	9
Bought insurance/enrolled in drug discount program	**2%**	**3**

Employment & entrepreneurship

The public library plays a vital role for job seekers, from giving them Internet access to find online job postings and fill out online applications, to helping write cover letters and resumes. With the national unemployment rate at 9.5% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), many libraries have anecdotally reported an increase in the networked library computers for job searches. 35% of the computer users at Anytown Public Library reported they had used these resources for employment or career purposes in the past 12 months. **The most frequent (25% of library computer users) use of library computing resources for employment purposes was to search for a job or career opportunity**, followed by researching job-related information (Table 6). **Of users who used library computers to search for a job opportunity, 38% were granted an interview and 13%, or 6 Anytown Public Library survey respondents, were actually hired for a new position**.

Table 6: Employment

Used library computers to:	% of users	n
Look for job	25%	45
Apply for job/send out resume	**16%**	**29**
Got interview	**9%**	**17**
Got job	**3%**	**6**
Work on resume	14%	25
Receive skill-based training	7%	12
Research/find info related to job/profession	20%	37

In comments, many respondents also indicated they used computer access at libraries to do actual work for an existing job, either while away from the workplace on travel, or for self-employment needs like freelance writing, website design, and also as an alternative location for home-based offices.

Members of the community looking to start or maintain their own business also find valuable resources with the library's computing services. From looking up a business plan to finding new clients and contracting opportunities, library Internet access is essential for these users. While using library computers and Internet connections to start or manage a business was the area with the least frequent use, with just 8% of library computer users using library resources for this purpose, use for this purpose did have significant outcomes (Table 7). **Of those respondents who used library computers for self-employment activities, 50% started a business and 57% (8) located potential customers.**

Table 7: Entrepreneurship

Used library computers to:	% of users	n
Started own business	4%	7
Wrote business plan	3%	6
Got loans/venture capital	3%	5
Apply for business license/permit	3%	6
Found potential customers	4%	8
Business increased	**3%**	**5**
Learned about government contract opportunities	2%	3
Applied for government contract	**1%**	**2**
Received government contract	**1%**	**2**

eCommerce

eCommerce activities include online banking, looking up investment information, and comparing product prices and reviews. Providing access to networked computers allows community members to research prices and reviews on products to gain information that would not be available to them

otherwise. Consumers connected to the Internet are able to use search tools at no charge to easily find and compare shopping information, leaving those without access to the Internet at a disadvantage when it comes to making informed purchasing decisions.

23% of Anytown Public Library users indicated that they used a public library computer or Internet connection for eCommerce purposes. The most common tasks were to do online banking (17%) and to pay bills (12%), although many patrons also took advantage of both library resources and information on the Internet to research and purchase products and services of all kinds (Table 8). Some people also looked up their credit ratings and strategies to reduce or manage debt. **Of those who used library technology resources to learn about getting out of debt, 100% indicated that as a result of this use, they were able to reduce or better manage their debt.**

Table 8: eCommerce

Activities and Outcomes	% of users	n
Online banking	17%	31
Paid bills	12%	22
Investment info	2%	3
Researched products/services	11%	20
Bought online	11%	21
Sold online	3%	6
Looked up credit rating	2%	4
Researched loans /refinancing	3%	6
Learn about getting out of debt	2%	4
Reduced/managed debt	**2%**	**4**

Social inclusion

Patrons use public access technology to keep in touch with family and friends, for social networking, and pursue hobbies. Social inclusion uses were the most frequently reported, with 55% of users reporting having used the library computers and Internet connection for a social purpose. The most common (**45%**) social use was to communicate with family and friends; 33% (27) of those using library technology for this purpose communicated with people living outside the United States. Figure 6 shows other social uses accomplished using library computers and Internet connections.
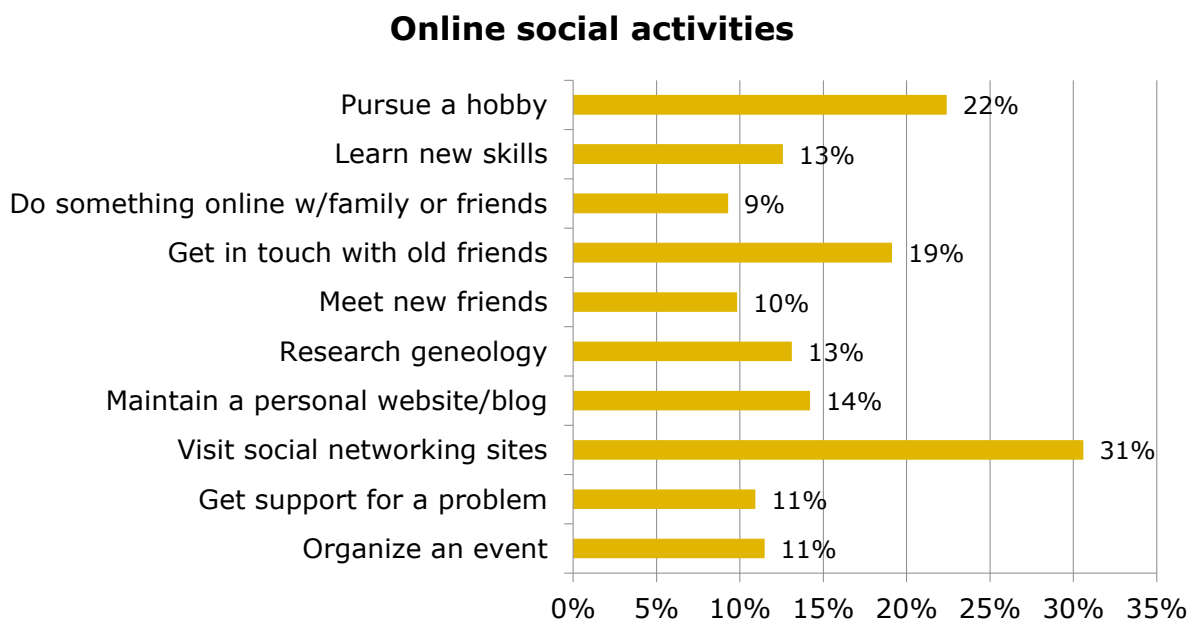
Online social activities

Activity	Percentage
Pursue a hobby	22%
Learn new skills	13%
Do something online w/family or friends	9%
Get in touch with old friends	19%
Meet new friends	10%
Research geneology	13%
Maintain a personal website/blog	14%
Visit social networking sites	31%
Get support for a problem	11%
Organize an event	11%

Figure 6: Social inclusion activities

Patron Satisfaction/Suggestions for Improvement

Respondents indicated their satisfaction levels with their access to public computing services. Of public computer users, **87% said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their library and access to public computing services**.
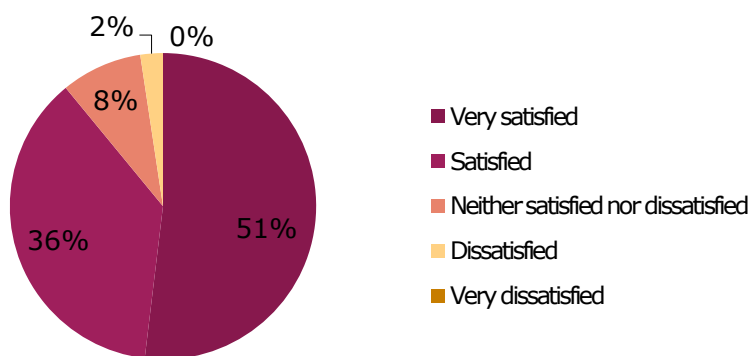
Satisfaction with public access technology

- Very satisfied — 51%
- Satisfied — 36%
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied — 8%
- Dissatisfied — 2%
- Very dissatisfied — 0%

Figure 7: Patron satisfaction with PAC resources and services

Respondents were also given an opportunity to write-in suggestions for improving library computing services and resources; 62 computer users from the Anytown Public Library provided responses to this question. The most frequent recommendations for improvements are shown in Figure 8.

Computer-related	Policy-related	Other
More computers (14)	Don't filter computers (9)	More computer classes (1)
Upgrade computers (4)	Have separate computers/policies for different types of use (3)	More library hours (1)
Faster Internet connections (3)	Enforce noise and behavior standards (3)	

Figure 8: Suggestions for improvements to PAC resources and services

Importance of computer resources

We asked all respondents about the importance of free computer access for themselves and their community. 62% of respondents reported that public computing resources are important or very important to themselves, personally; however, even more (93%) felt that these resources are important or very important to have available for others in the community (Figure 9).
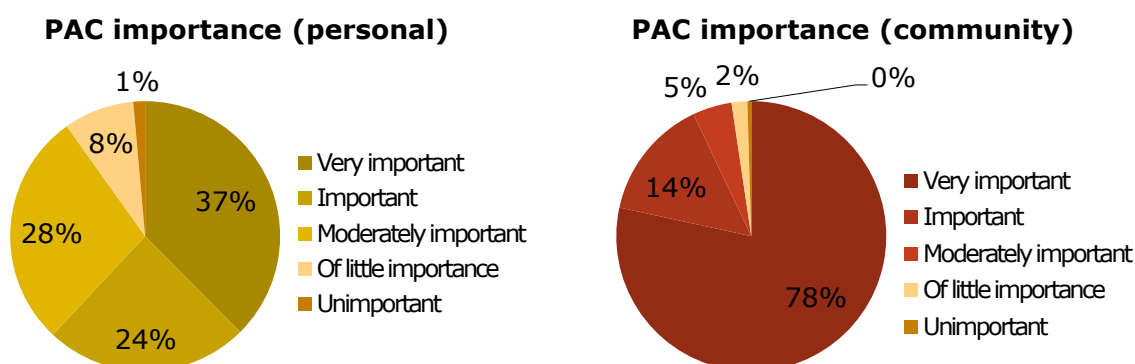

Figure 9: Responses to the importance of having public computers personally and for the community

Demographic Information

The following Figures 10-12 provide demographic information about survey respondents from the Anytown Public Library.
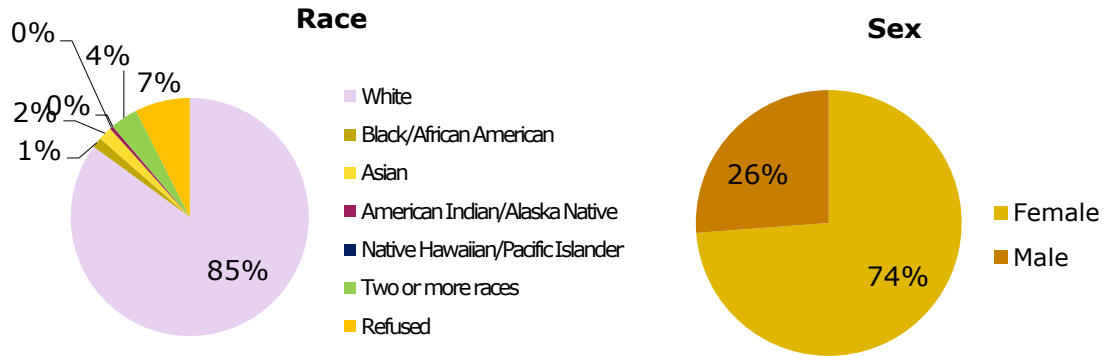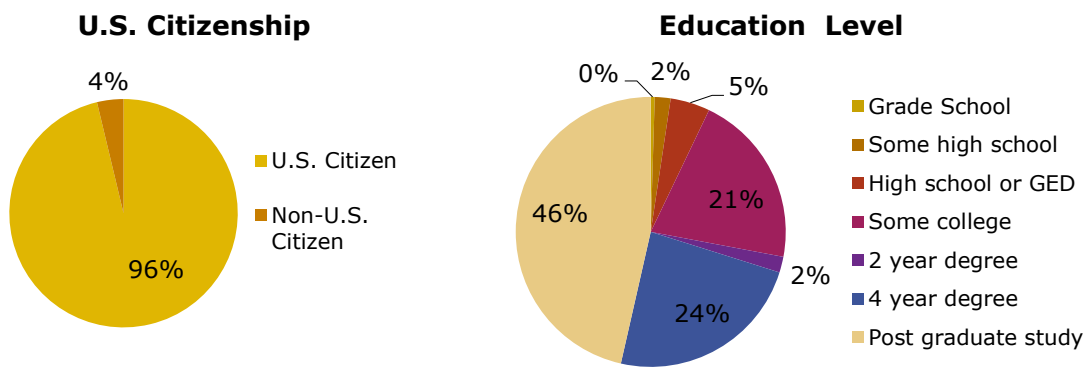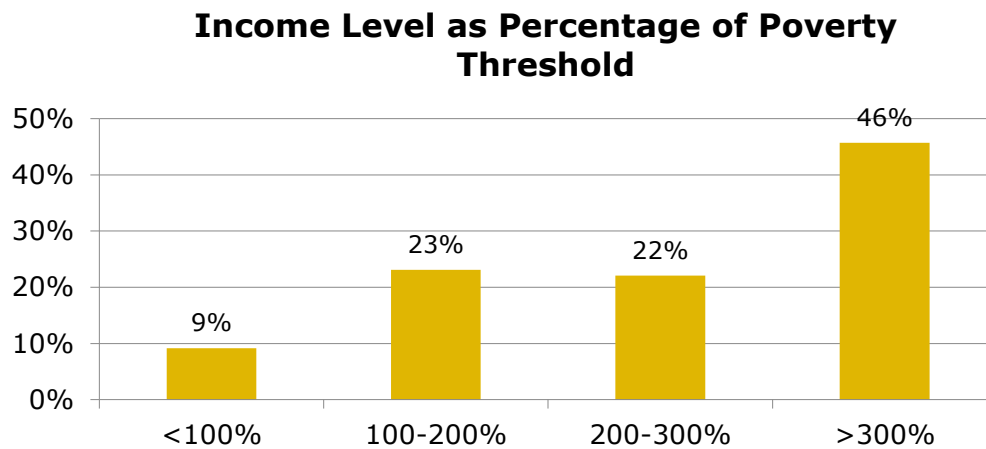
Race

- White — 85%
- Black/African American
- Asian
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- Refused

0% 4% 7% 2% 0% 1%

Sex

- Female — 74%
- Male — 26%

Figure 10 – Race and sex of respondents

U.S. Citizenship

4%

96%

- U.S. Citizen
- Non-U.S. Citizen

Education Level

0% 2% 5%

46% 21% 2% 24%

- Grade School
- Some high school
- High school or GED
- Some college
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Post graduate study

Figure 11 – Citizenship status and level of education attained among respondents

Income Level as Percentage of Poverty Threshold

Figure 12 – Income level (calculated as a percentage of the National Poverty Threshold) among respondents

Conclusion

We hope that this report has given you useful information about your library and public computer users. Linking this information with higher level policy goals and current, relevant concerns in the library's community will help demonstrate the value that the public library and free computing resources and services bring to your community. Suggestions for framing your advocacy efforts in a way that shows the value and political importance of the library's services can be found on the IMPACT Survey website at http://tascha.uw.edu/usimpact.