

## Public Programs Librarian Contacts Perspectives on the project

The following summarizes the results of the survey of 275 librarians that adds their direct voice to the programming discussion.

A listwise deletion method was used for participants with responses missing from the two qualitative, open-ended questions. Consequently, these participants were excluded from the qualitative data analysis. Additionally, IP addresses that were repeated in the datafile were flagged and screened for the possibility of duplicate survey response patterns (n=34 flagged). However, review of the responses revealed unique response patterns for each of the duplicate response sets. Timestamps from these duplicates also indicated that the responses may have been completed from the same computer, but that all of the responses were completed with time differences greater than 8 minutes.

The final sample of 275 librarians was analyzed using Leximancer software to explore relevant themes and concepts. The Leximancer program provided a helpful visual tool to see how different concepts (i.e., recurring words and similar words), formed larger themes and the ways in which they were connected (Figure 1). Colors signify importance and relevance, where red, orange, and yellow are “hot” topics, and green, blue, and purple are themes of less importance (less represented in the responses).

**Table 1**

*What is the type of library at the center of your work? (n=272)*

Type of Library	Frequency
Public	231
Academic	24
School	4
Special	13

Note: Two respondents did not complete this question

## Respondents' Hopes for the Project

*"What do you hope might be discovered through the project, which could advance public programming?"*

The dominant theme that emerged from librarians' responses (refer to red balloon in Figure 1) suggested that the community was most important to library programming. This theme seemed to highlight librarians' needs for programming, as they are inextricably based on the wants and need of their local communities. The need for an accurate assessment of their local community's wants and needs was often mentioned, illustrated in the following two responses:

*"How we can implement good programs based on the community needs and desires."*

*"What kind of programming is most in demand. How to better determine what will work best for different communities."*

As a central theme, community was closely connected with concepts such as needs, support, projects, impacts, information, and resources. A number of responses indicated that librarians would like to identify their connections with their local communities, while also evaluating the impact, and consequently the importance of their program services on their communities. The following response begins to illustrate these needs:

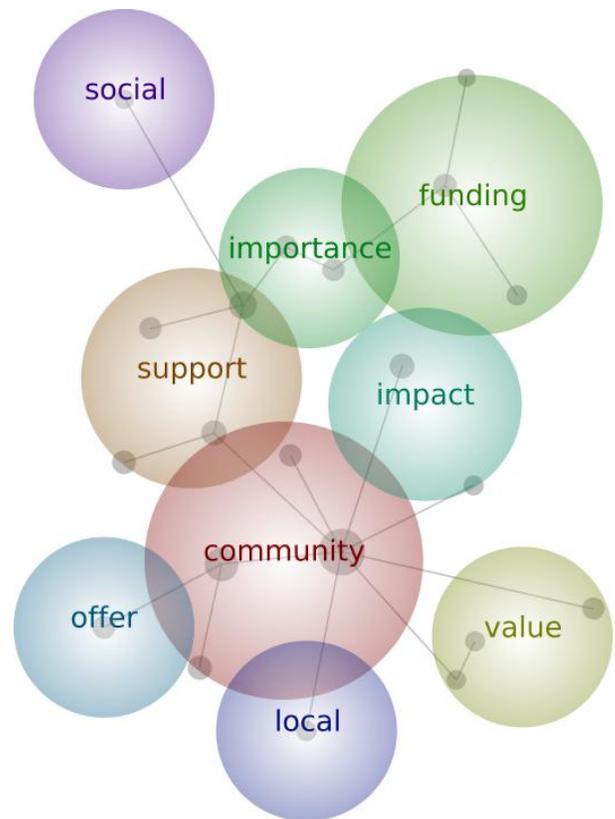
*"Based on the description above, it would be wonderful if this project could support and reinforce the importance of libraries by showing that we have an impact on our communities, not only through our material resources, but through library programming."*

The second most salient theme (refer to orange balloon in Figure 1) that emerged from the analysis concentrated on programming *support* by pulling together the concepts of *projects*, *resources*, and *programming*. The overwhelming majority of responses described the library's need for both financial and research-based support, noted in the following two responses:

*"Data that provide justification for the financial support and manpower required to put on programs in libraries."*

*"The data should help secure library board support for creating library budgets that allocate funds specifically for adult programming (in addition to children's and teen programming)."*

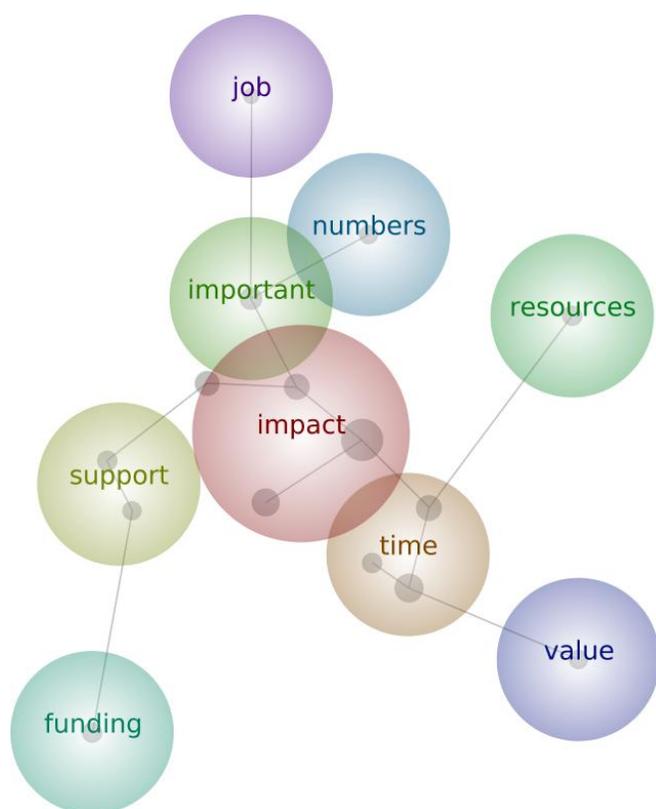
Overall, the librarians in this study identified a need to strengthen local libraries' connection with their surrounding community by considering the unique affordances of each community through an assessment of the public's wants and needs from library programming. Librarians also indicated a need for research-based program support, oftentimes cited as a method of obtaining and securing financial support for the library's continuing programming. Other prominent themes that emerged included *value* and *funding*, in which both described a need for the public to determine library programming as important and essential for sustainability.



## Fears or Concerns about the Project

The second open-ended question prompted librarians with the following:

*“Do you have any fears or concerns about what the project might find, which could have a negative impact on public programming?”*



Noted in the red balloon within Figure 2, the central theme that emerged from the responses was *impact*. Although responses in the previous question identified a need for the assessment of program impact, librarians were also concerned that their programming has little to no effect on the surrounding community. This is illustrated in the following response:

*“My only concern would be to find that programming does not have a positive impact on our community....”*

As a theme, *impact* included the following related concepts: *negative*, *learning*, and *adult*. The analysis revealed *time/staffing* to be the second largest theme, which closely linked with program *impact*. Respondents expressed concern with the possibility that considerable amounts of library staff time were allocated to programming development and implementation, while the programming may have a minimum impact on the community with too much cost to the library. The connections between program impact, time/staffing concerns, and library funding is illustrated in the following:

*“I worry a little about discovering the ‘cost per person’ of programming when we don’t always have a value measurable outcome. We might have spent 5 staff hours developing a workshop and only 5 people attend.”*

Additionally, librarians identified the possibility that library programming has little to no impact on life-long learning, illustrated below:

*“That there isn’t enough evidence that library’s play a part in lifelong learning. I know this isn’t true and I guess my biggest concern is administration seeing that adult programming is [not as] important as youth programming.”*

Responses from Question 2 indicated that librarians had prevailing concerns that the project might uncover a “low return on investment.” Librarians feared that their investment (time and financial) in public programming was potentially greater than what research data might report as the actual impact of the programming on each respective communities. The following two responses sum up these fears and concerns:

*“If the research ‘proves’ that library programmers are planning programs which do not have a healthy impact on understanding and learning, then I guess we’re all screwed. Most of the programs I plan in my narrow niche... are done through donated time or at minimal cost.”*

*“If the research ‘proves’ that library programs are of little to no value in comparison to the costs - time, dollars, supplies, coordination - I can kiss any hope of sufficient funding from... good-bye.”*