

ALA American Library Association

April 9, 2010

The ALA participated in the January 2010 Harris Poll Quorum conducted by Harris Interactive. The survey was conducted by telephone within the United States between January 20 and 24, 2010 among a nationwide cross section of 1,025 adults (aged 18 and over). Eighteen questions were asked by Harris for the ALA. Top-line results are included at the end of this document. In addition to those summary results, more detailed results are highlighted here.

KEY FINDINGS

Two-thirds (65%) of Americans indicate they have used their public library either in-person, by telephone or computer in the past year, representing 151.4 million Americans.

- **Sixty-eight percent (68%) of employed adults had used their library in the past year, 62% of unemployed adults, and 53% of retired adults.**
- **Eighty percent (80%) of those ages 18-24, 73% ages 35-44 and 70% ages 25-34 have used their library in the past year.**

Three in ten (30%) respondents (representing about 45.4 million adult Americans), who have visited their public library in the past year report increasing their public library use in the last 6 months.

Among those who have used their public library more in the past 6 months:

- **Nearly half (43%) of those between the ages 18-24, and one third (32%) of those between ages 35-44 have increased use over the past 6 months. Further, 34% of those who are employed and 24% of those who are unemployed report increasing overall use of the public library.**
- **More than a third of residents of the Northeast (37%) and West (35%) regions of the US also report increasing use of public libraries.**

Among those who have visited the library by computer in the past year, one third (35%) report increasing their public library access by computer over the past 6 months. Respondents were read a series of statements about their public libraries and asked the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with them.

- **96% of Americans (223.7 million) agreed that because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.**
- **94% of Americans (219.0 million) agreed that the library improves the quality of life in their community.**

When asked about services used at the public library in the past year, 77% of Americans reported taking out books (e-books, or books on paper or tape) as the number one use. Second was consulting a librarian (67%), followed by connecting to the Internet (41%) and checking email (25%).

Among those who have used the public library by phone or computer in the past year, six in ten (60%) report that they have renewed materials online or by telephone, up from 41% in 2006 when ALA last asked households this question. Nearly six in ten (57%) of these public library users who have visited by phone or computer also report they have checked the library catalog, up from 45% in 2006. Similarly, four in ten (42%) of these users have visited the libraries web page, up from 32% in 2006.

When asked what they most used the public library for over the last year, 41% of library visitors say they use the public library for education (homework or to take a class) purposes as the number one reason- representing more than 62.1 million Americans. Close to 26 million Americans (17%) visited their public library to use a computer and nearly 17 million to conduct a job search or write a resume (11%). Other top reasons why Americans visit the public library include entertainment (35%, 53.0 million) and for U.S. or local news or information 11% (16.7 million).

Male library visitors between ages 35-54 (23%) are more likely than female visitors between ages 35-54 (13%) to go to the library to use computers, and men ages 18-34 (51%) were somewhat more likely to visit the library for educational purposes (for homework or to take a class) than their female counterparts (46%).

Library visitors in the West (27%) are more likely to use library computers than those in the North-East (7%) or South (15%). Library users in the South (50%) and the North-East (48%) are much more likely to visit the library for educational purposes than library users in the West (37%) or Midwest (28%).

CHILDREN'S USE

For households with school-age children, 86% report checking out books, movies and music for free as the most important reasons why they take their children to the library. 61% indicate going to the library gives them something to do together, and 45% go because the library has great programs and services.

When asked what their children do at the library, 86% report checking out books, 73% read for fun, 46% check out movies, 43% do research for school or to get homework help, and 41% have been to the library to attend story-hour or other kids' programs.

When asked which two programs and services they would most like their public library to offer for children, most adults find it difficult to choose only two. In fact, parents who visit the library with their children essentially feel all of the following would be important:

- **Summer reading programs (35%)**
- **Story-hours (28%)**
- **Homework help (34%)**
- **Computer classes (23%)**
- **After-school activities (32%)**
- **Teen programs (14%)**

Questions about this household survey should be directed to Denise Davis (dmdavis@ala.org) in the ALA Office for Research & Statistics (312-280-4273).

ABOUT HARRIS INTERACTIVE

Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com), based in New York City, New York, is the 11th largest and the fastest-growing market research firm in the world, most widely known for *The Harris Poll*[®] and for its pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. Long recognized by its clients for delivering insights that enable confident business decisions, the Company blends the science of innovative research with the art of strategic consulting to deliver knowledge that leads to measurable and enduring value.

January 2010 Harris Poll Quorum

January 27, 2010

Created for: American Library Association

Presented by: Harris Interactive

Interviewing: January 20-24, 2010

Respondents: 1,025 Adults 18+

*NOTE: A (*) means less than one-half percent responding; and a (-) means non-response or zero percent*

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

I am going to be asking some questions about public libraries.

Q1. First, do you have a library card?

1025	BASE
62%	Yes
38%	No
*	Don't know/refused

Q2. Now, think about how many times during the past YEAR you have visited the public library or used public library services. How many times have you visited or used the public library...?

In person

1025	BASE
36%	Not at all
27%	One to five times
10%	Six to ten times
13%	Eleven to twenty-five times
13%	Over twenty five times
1%	Don't know/refused

By telephone

1025	BASE
85%	Not at all
10%	One to five times
2%	Six to ten times
1%	Eleven to twenty-five times
1%	Over twenty five times
1%	Don't know/refused

By computer

1025	BASE
70%	Not at all
15%	One to five times
4%	Six to ten times
6%	Eleven to twenty-five times
3%	Over twenty five times
1%	Don't know/refused

SUMMARY TABLE OF LIBRARY VISITATION

1025	BASE
65%	Visited Library (NET)
62%	In Person
14%	By Telephone
28%	By Computer
33%	Did Not Visit Library
2%	Don't know/refused

Q3. Now, thinking about your library use in the last 6 months, would you say your library use...has increased, decreased or stayed about the same?"

In person

638	BASE
19%	Increased
20%	Decreased
60%	Stayed about the same
1%	Don't know/refused

By telephone

163	BASE
4%	Increased
24%	Decreased
69%	Stayed about the same
3%	Don't know/refused

By computer

253	BASE
35%	Increased
15%	Decreased
50%	Stayed about the same
1%	Don't know/refused

SUMMARY TABLE OF LIBRARY VISITATION TRENDS*

663	BASE
30%	Increased (NET)
18%	In Person
1%	By Phone
15%	By Computer
24%	Decreased (NET)
19%	In Person
5%	By Phone
6%	By Computer
68%	Stayed the Same (NET)
58%	In Person
15%	By Phone
22%	By Computer
1%	Don't know/refused (NET)

**Please note that samples sizes vary for each mode of visitation.*

BASE: VISTED PUBLIC LIBRARY IN PERSON IN THE PAST YEAR

Q4. When you have used the public library in person in the past year, which of the following services did you use? How about...?

SUMMARY TABLE OF YES

638	BASE
77%	Take out books (e-books or book on paper or tape)
67%	Consult the librarian
55%	Use a computer to see what the library has available
42%	Take out CDs, videos, or computer software
41%	Connect to the internet
40%	Use reference materials, like the encyclopedia
39%	Read newspapers or magazines
26%	Use a computer to write a paper or prepare a resume
25%	Check email
24%	Hear a speaker, see a movie, or attend a special program
9%	Take a class or workshop

BASE: USED PUBLIC LIBRARY BY TELEPHONE OR BY COMPUTER IN THE PAST YEAR

Q5. When you have used the public library by telephone or computer during the past year, which of the following services did you use? How about...?

SUMMARY TABLE OF YES

344	BASE
60%	Renewed borrowed items
57%	Checked the library's computerized catalog
50%	Consulted the librarian for help
42%	Used other resources on the library's web page

BASE: USED PUBLIC LIBRARY IN PERSON, BY TELEPHONE OR BY COMPUTER IN THE PAST YEAR

Q6. Thinking back over the last year, which one of the following did you most use the public library for?

663	BASE
29%	Educational purposes (for homework or to take a class)
23%	Entertainment
7%	To use a computer
7%	Borrow books/novels (unspecified)
5%	To conduct a job search or write a resume
4%	U.S. or local news or information
4%	To look for information on starting or running a business
3%	International news or information
2%	Information on health issues
2%	Travel or vacation information
1%	Meet up with friends
1%	Financial or investment news or information
1%	Borrow music/CDs/DVDs/audio books
*	Make photocopies
*	Children's services/borrow children's books
*	Personal reasons/uses (unspecified)
3%	Other
*	None/none of the above/no other reason/don't use the library
6%	Don't know/refused

BASE: USED PUBLIC LIBRARY IN PERSON, BY TELEPHONE OR BY COMPUTER IN THE PAST YEAR

Q7. And from the remaining items, which one did you use the public library for second most?

610	BASE
13%	Entertainment
13%	Educational purposes (for homework or to take a class)
10%	To use a computer
8%	U.S. or local news or information
6%	To conduct a job search or write a resume
5%	Travel or vacation information
4%	Meet up with friends
4%	Information on health issues
3%	Borrow books/novels (unspecified)
3%	International news or information
2%	To look for information on starting or running a business
2%	Financial or investment news or information
1%	Children's services/borrow children's books
1%	Research/reference materials (unspecified)
1%	Borrow music/CDs/DVDs/audio books
*	General information
*	Make photocopies
*	Personal reasons/uses (unspecified)
2%	Other
3%	None/none of the above/no other reason/don't use the library
19%	Don't know/refused

SUMMARY TABLE OF Q6/Q7

663	BASE
41%	Educational purposes (for homework or to take a class)
35%	Entertainment
17%	To use a computer
11%	U.S. or local news or information
11%	To conduct a job search or write a resume
10%	Borrow books/novels (unspecified)
7%	Travel or vacation information
6%	International news or information
6%	To look for information on starting or running a business
6%	Information on health issues
5%	Meet up with friends
3%	Financial or investment news or information
1%	Children's services/borrow children's books
1%	Borrow music/CDs/DVDs/audio books
1%	Research/reference materials (unspecified)
*	Make photocopies
*	General information
*	Personal reasons/uses (unspecified)
5%	Other
*	None/none of the above/no other reason/don't use the library
6%	Don't know/refused

Q8. Overall, thinking of your public library, based on what you know or have heard or read, how satisfied are you with your public library – extremely satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, only a little satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

1025	BASE
71%	Satisfied (NET)
29%	Extremely satisfied
43%	Very satisfied
14%	Somewhat satisfied
4%	Not/Only a Little Satisfied (NET)
2%	Only a little satisfied
2%	Not at all satisfied
10%	Don't know/refused

LIBRARY USAGE BY CHILDREN

Now, let me ask you something slightly different.

D2a. Do you have any children? (IF YES, ASK) Are any of them living at home with you?

1025	BASE
70%	Have Children (NET)
41%	Yes, have children and living at home
29%	Yes, have children, but none living at home
30%	No, do not have any children/never had children
*	Refused

BASE: HAVE CHILDREN (D2a=1, 2)

D2b. What ages are your children?

781	BASE
16%	3 or younger
9%	4 to 5 years of age
19%	6 to 9 years of age
15%	10 to 12 years of age
13%	13 to 15 years of age
8%	16 to 17 years of age
58%	18 years of age or older
2%	Refused

BASE: HAVE CHILDREN (D2a=1, 2)

Q11. Do you ever visit the library with your child(ren)?

255	BASE
64%	Yes
36%	No

BASE: VISIT LIBRARY WITH CHILDREN

Q12. Which of the following are the most important reasons that you personally take your child(ren) to your public library?

172	BASE
86%	I can check out books, movies and music for free
61%	The library gives us something to do together
45%	The library has great programs and services
27%	The library has free Internet access
27%	The library is a good place to complete homework
2%	Promote/foster a love of reading/literacy
5%	Other
2%	Don't know/refused

BASE: VISIT LIBRARY WITH CHILDREN

Q13. And, which of the following things, if any, do your children do at the public library? Please indicate all that apply.

172	BASE
86%	Check out books
73%	Read for fun
46%	Check out movies
43%	Do research for school/get homework help
41%	Attend story-hour, other kids' programs
39%	Use the computer/Internet
30%	Check out CDs
1%	Entertainment/play games/console games
*	Other
5%	None of the above

BASE: VISIT LIBRARY WITH CHILDREN

Q14. Which TWO of the following are the programs and services you would MOST LIKE your public library to offer for your children?

172	BASE
35%	Summer reading programs
34%	Homework help
32%	Afterschool activities
28%	Story-hours
23%	Computer classes
14%	Teen programs
1%	Kindergarten/preschooler program
*	Other
1%	None of the above/library has them already/children too old
4%	Don't know/refused

VALUE PROPOSITION

Q15. Overall, how would you rank the benefits of the public library compared to the benefits of other tax-supported services, such as schools, parks and roads? Would you say...?

1025	BASE
36%	At the top of the list
49%	In the middle
11%	At the bottom
5%	Don't know/refused

Q16. And, how would you rank the value of librarians in public libraries compared to the value of other professionals in your community? Would you say...?

1025	BASE
35%	At the top of the list
51%	In the middle
9%	At the bottom
4%	Don't know/refused

Q17. Now, let me read you some ways in which public libraries may be valuable or beneficial to different people. For each one, please tell me how important that characteristic or service is to you personally – very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all.

SUMMARY TABLE OF IMPORTANT (Very or Somewhat)

1025	BASE
91%	Services are free
87%	Is a place where I can learn for a lifetime
86%	Provides information for school and work
84%	Enhances my education
83%	Serves as a community center
79%	Is a source of cultural programs and activities
76%	Provides computer access, training and support
73%	Provides accurate and up-to-date health information
69%	Provides accurate and up-to-date financial information
66%	Helps in finding a job
61%	Helps in starting a business

SUMMARY TABLE OF NOT IMPORTANT (Not Too or Not At All)

1025	BASE
32%	Helps in starting a business
30%	Helps in finding a job
27%	Provides accurate and up-to-date financial information
22%	Provides accurate and up-to-date health information
21%	Provides computer access, training and support
18%	Is a source of cultural programs and activities
14%	Serves as a community center
14%	Enhances my education
12%	Provides information for school and work
11%	Is a place where I can learn for a lifetime
8%	Services are free

Services are free

1025	BASE
91%	Important (NET)
77%	Very important
14%	Somewhat important
8%	Not Important (NET)
4%	Not too important
4%	Not important at all
1%	Don't know/refused

Provides information for school and work

1025	BASE
86%	Important (NET)
66%	Very important
21%	Somewhat important
12%	Not Important (NET)
5%	Not too important
7%	Not important at all
2%	Don't know/refused

Provides accurate and up-to-date health information

1025	BASE
73%	Important (NET)
45%	Very important
28%	Somewhat important
22%	Not Important (NET)
10%	Not too important
12%	Not important at all
5%	Don't know/refused

Provides accurate and up-to-date financial information

1025	BASE
69%	Important (NET)
34%	Very important
34%	Somewhat important
27%	Not Important (NET)
13%	Not too important
14%	Not important at all
5%	Don't know/refused

Is a source of cultural programs and activities

1025	BASE
79%	Important (NET)
43%	Very important
37%	Somewhat important
18%	Not Important (NET)
8%	Not too important
9%	Not important at all
3%	Don't know/refused

Is a place where I can learn for a lifetime

1025	BASE
87%	Important (NET)
68%	Very important
19%	Somewhat important
11%	Not Important (NET)
6%	Not too important
5%	Not important at all
2%	Don't know/refused

Serves as a community center

1025	BASE
83%	Important (NET)
53%	Very important
30%	Somewhat important
14%	Not Important (NET)
6%	Not too important
7%	Not important at all
3%	Don't know/refused

Helps in finding a job

1025	BASE
66%	Important (NET)
41%	Very important
25%	Somewhat important
30%	Not Important (NET)
14%	Not too important
16%	Not important at all
5%	Don't know/refused

Helps in starting a business

1025	BASE
61%	Important (NET)
29%	Very important
32%	Somewhat important
32%	Not Important (NET)
15%	Not too important
16%	Not important at all
7%	Don't know/refused

Provides computer access, training and support

1025	BASE
76%	Important (NET)
51%	Very important
25%	Somewhat important
21%	Not Important (NET)
9%	Not too important
12%	Not important at all
3%	Don't know/refused

Enhances my education

1025	BASE
84%	Important (NET)
62%	Very important
22%	Somewhat important
14%	Not Important (NET)
5%	Not too important
9%	Not important at all
2%	Don't know/refused

Q18. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Do you strongly or somewhat agree/disagree with that statement?

SUMMARY TABLE OF AGREE (Strongly or Somewhat)

1025	BASE
96%	Because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed
94%	The library improves the quality of life in our community
87%	The public library is important to my family's education
83%	Because it provides free information regarding local, state and federal elections, the library is critical to our democracy
81%	My public library deserves more funding

SUMMARY TABLE OF DISAGREE (Strongly or Somewhat)

1025	BASE
13%	My public library deserves more funding
13%	Because it provides free information regarding local, state and federal elections, the library is critical to our democracy
10%	The public library is important to my family's education
5%	The library improves the quality of life in our community
3%	Because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed

The public library is important to my family's education

1025	BASE
87%	Agree (NET)
59%	Strongly agree
28%	Somewhat agree
10%	Disagree (NET)
6%	Somewhat disagree
4%	Strongly disagree
3%	Don't know/refused

The library improves the quality of life in our community

1025	BASE
94%	Agree (NET)
63%	Strongly agree
31%	Somewhat agree
5%	Disagree (NET)
2%	Somewhat disagree
2%	Strongly disagree
2%	Don't know/refused

My public library deserves more funding

1025	BASE
81%	Agree (NET)
55%	Strongly agree
27%	Somewhat agree
13%	Disagree (NET)
8%	Somewhat disagree
5%	Strongly disagree
6%	Don't know/refused

Because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed

1025	BASE
96%	Agree (NET)
76%	Strongly agree
19%	Somewhat agree
3%	Disagree (NET)
2%	Somewhat disagree
1%	Strongly disagree
1%	Don't know/refused

Because it provides free information regarding local, state and federal elections, the library is critical to our democracy

1025	BASE
83%	Agree (NET)
49%	Strongly agree
34%	Somewhat agree
13%	Disagree (NET)
8%	Somewhat disagree
5%	Strongly disagree
4%	Don't know/refused

ABOUT HARRIS INTERACTIVE

Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com), based in New York City, New York, is the 11th largest and the fastest-growing market research firm in the world, most widely known for *The Harris Poll*[®] and for its pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. Long recognized by its clients for delivering insights that enable confident business decisions, the Company blends the science of innovative research with the art of strategic consulting to deliver knowledge that leads to measurable and enduring value.