

How Americans Value Public Libraries in their Communities

The Pew Research Center's [Internet & American Life Project](#) has produced a series of reports presenting **new research on library services, trends in reading habits and patron needs in the digital age**. This three-year research program is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and informed by an advisory group, focus groups and surveys of library users, non-users, and librarians.

This brief, prepared by the Gates Foundation, offers information and potential messaging based on this research for you to customize and use in your community. Please feel free to use the information in this report as you see fit.

Key Messages:

1. Americans value public libraries as institutions that enrich their communities

- 90% of Americans believe closing their public library would impact their community, while two thirds state it would personally impact them and their families
- 94% say that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community
- Over half of all Americans visited a public library in the past year, and nearly three quarters live in a “library household” in which members use the public library

2. Libraries provide all Americans with opportunities to learn and excel by providing access to information and resources that they may not otherwise have

- 95% of Americans agree that the materials and resources available at public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed
- 95% say that public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading
- 81% say that public libraries provide many services people would have a hard time finding elsewhere.

3. Library services are especially valued by underserved communities

- 30% of Americans say the job search assistance provided by libraries is very important, however support for those services is considerably higher among blacks (56%), Hispanics (54%) and low-income adults (47%)
- 45% of Americans say youth programs provided by libraries are very important, however support for those programs is considerably higher among blacks (63%), Hispanics (62%) and low-income adults (56%)
- Of the 33% of Americans who say libraries are very important for providing access to the Internet and computers, 57% of those respondents are black, 54% are Hispanic and 47% are low-income

4. Public libraries are well known and accessible, however Americans remain unfamiliar about the diversity / range of services they offer

- 91% of Americans know where the closest public library is; 93% say it's easy to visit in person; and 82% say their public library's website is easy to use

- However, only 23% of those who have used a public library are aware of all or most of the services they offer: 47% say they know some of what it offers, and 20% say they don't know very much about what is offered. This echoes findings from Pew's 2012 survey.

5. Libraries have successfully adopted new technologies and made them available to patrons, however Americans are unaware of the technology services and resources libraries offer

- Only a third of Americans believe libraries have not done a good job of keeping up with new technologies, while 55% disagree. Meanwhile, 47% of Americans say libraries are very important for access to research resources, while 33% say they're very important for access to computers, printers, and the Internet
- 56% of internet users without home access say public libraries' basic technological resources (such as computers, internet, and printers) are very important



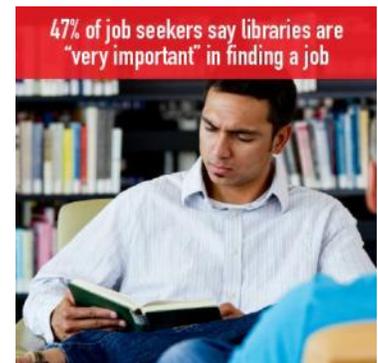
Social Media

1. Twitter:

- How do Americans value their local public library? Learn more from the latest Pew research: <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B> #PewInternet #ALA
- 94% of Americans say public libraries improve the quality of life in their community. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B> #PewInternet
- Are libraries keeping up with technology? New Pew research shows 55% think so <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B> #PewInternet #ALA
- What % of Americans say libraries are important for finding a job? Learn more at <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B> #PewInternet
- What library services do Americans value the most? Learn more from the latest Pew research: <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B> #PewInternet #ALA

2. Facebook:

- New research from Pew Internet illustrates how public libraries help improve the quality of communities and people's lives. Learn more about how Americans use and benefit from their public libraries in the latest Pew report at <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B>.
- Nine out of 10 Americans believe their local public library improves the quality of life in their community. A new report from Pew Internet reveals how much Americans value their public libraries and believe libraries are providing quality technology services to their communities and families. Learn more about different library users and user perceptions by visiting <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B>.



- The latest report from Pew Internet shows nearly all Americans believe libraries provide people with access to materials, resources, and learning opportunities that help them excel in work, school, and life. People may have a difficult time finding these services elsewhere. Learn more about how libraries are helping their communities succeed at <http://bit.ly/19Epu8B>.



Template blog post/op-ed

This op-ed is intended to be customized and used in your community. While the Pew research is national data, the results are often seen at the local level. The Racine Public Library in Racine, Wisconsin did an excellent job relating the Pew work to the changes they have seen in their community and how the library has developed services to meet the needs of patrons. This [National Journal](http://www.nationaljournal.com/next-america/perspectives/libraries-as-america-s-techno-glue-20140122) article can be accessed by visiting <http://www.nationaljournal.com/next-america/perspectives/libraries-as-america-s-techno-glue-20140122>.

As librarians, we see our impact on our communities and neighbors every day. After school programs that allow teens to explore and experiment with new technologies. Unemployed workers using library computers to search for and apply for jobs. People using email and social networks to connect with their friends and family. These services, and others offered at [LIBRARY NAME], have a profound impact on our community, showing that in an age of smart phones and Google, public libraries are still valuable.

And it is not just locally that the answer is a resounding yes, as demonstrated this fall when researchers from the [Pew Internet and American Life](#) project asked Americans in a national poll what value they derive from public libraries and how their library benefits their community. The top findings in the report, titled [How Americans Value Public Libraries in their Communities](#), demonstrate that public libraries continue to enrich communities and provide all users the tools and opportunities to succeed:

- **Americans value public libraries as institutions that enrich and their communities:** Nine out of 10 Americans say closing their public library would impact their community and 94 percent believe that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community.
- **Libraries afford communities access to information and resources that they may have a hard time finding elsewhere:** 95 percent of Americans agree that the materials and resources available at public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.
- **Library services are especially valued by marginalized and underserved communities:** Minorities, women, and adults living in low-income households place the greater value on public library services. For example, 56 percent of adults living in low-income households say libraries are very important in terms of providing youth programs.

While Americans understand the value of public libraries, there is still work to done in helping more neighbors, patrons and community members understand the full range of services their libraries provide. For example, only 23 percent of people who have visited a public library know most or all of the

services that are offered including classes to boost computer skills, children's literacy programs, and resume building support.

At a time when many people think Internet access is ubiquitous, three out of 10 adults in the U.S. lack a home broadband connection, meaning that public libraries continue to play an important role in bridging the digital divide. The [LIBRARY NAME] is reaching the [NAME COMMUNITY] through the following programs and services:

- [LIST AND DISCUSS RELEVANT LIBRARY PROGRAMS/SERVIVES]

How do you benefit from the [NAME LIBRARY]? Are there new services you would like to see? To learn more about our programs and community engagement, please visit our website [INSERT HYPERLINK] or stop by at [ADDRESS].