



Summary of Results

Sausalito Library Survey

*By Stephen M. Johnson &
Christine McCaslin
September 2007*

Introduction

The Sausalito Library Foundation was formed in 2006 with initial assistance from an estate bequest. One of the Foundation's current goals is to assist the Library Board with strategic planning for the next five years of library development. As part of this effort, the Foundation decided to conduct a public opinion survey to gauge community use of the library and public understanding of current library programs and services. Working closely with Sausalito Librarian Mary Richardson and consultant Ruth Metz, Northwest Survey & Data Services (NSDS) implemented an August 2007 telephone survey of Sausalito Residents.

In order to achieve highly accurate results, 361 residents of Sausalito were interviewed to obtain a margin of error of $\pm 5.0\%$. Interviews began on August 17th and were completed by August 30th. Dialing took place from 9AM until 8PM, except for Sunday when dialing started at 1PM. Residents were very receptive to participating in the survey and the CASRO response rate was a very high 60.2%, with a refusal rate of 8.7%.

Survey Results

This report summarizes the major survey results. Readers can look at the Topline section of the report for the exact question wording and the summarized responses to each question. Readers may refer to the 34 tables in the Banners section of this report for more detail and to find cross-tabulations of each question with demographic information and opinions on related questions. Finally, readers can look at the Narrative section for the complete set of responses for each open-ended question in the survey.

Use of the Sausalito Library

The survey started by asking respondents about their use of the Sausalito Library. A large percentage of respondents are frequent library users. Six percent use the library "several times a week", while an additional 13% use it "weekly" and another 28% use the library "once or twice a month." Together, 47% of the Sausalito population are common users of the library. However, on the other side, 21% of residents "never" use the library and another 17% "rarely" use the library.

Those respondents who did not use the library were asked for the main reason why they did not use the library. The most common response was that the individual or their family purchased their books and had no need of other library services. In addition,

many respondents claimed that they were able to satisfy their information needs from the internet. Some respondents also used other libraries in the surrounding area or in San Francisco, often because of their work location or the route they take while commuting. One elderly respondent talked about the difficulty of parking downtown and then walking to the library, and a few respondents mentioned that they did not know Sausalito had a library or where it was located. See the Narrative section of this report for more detail.

In order to learn more about non-use of the library, those respondents who only used the library rarely were also asked an additional question. They were asked if they wanted to use the library more, and what would encourage them to do so. Many respondents were unable to answer this question, but among those who did, the most common issues raised were improvements in parking and increases in the holdings of the collections, in particular the video and music collections, and audio books. See Banner Table 2 and the Narrative section for more detail.

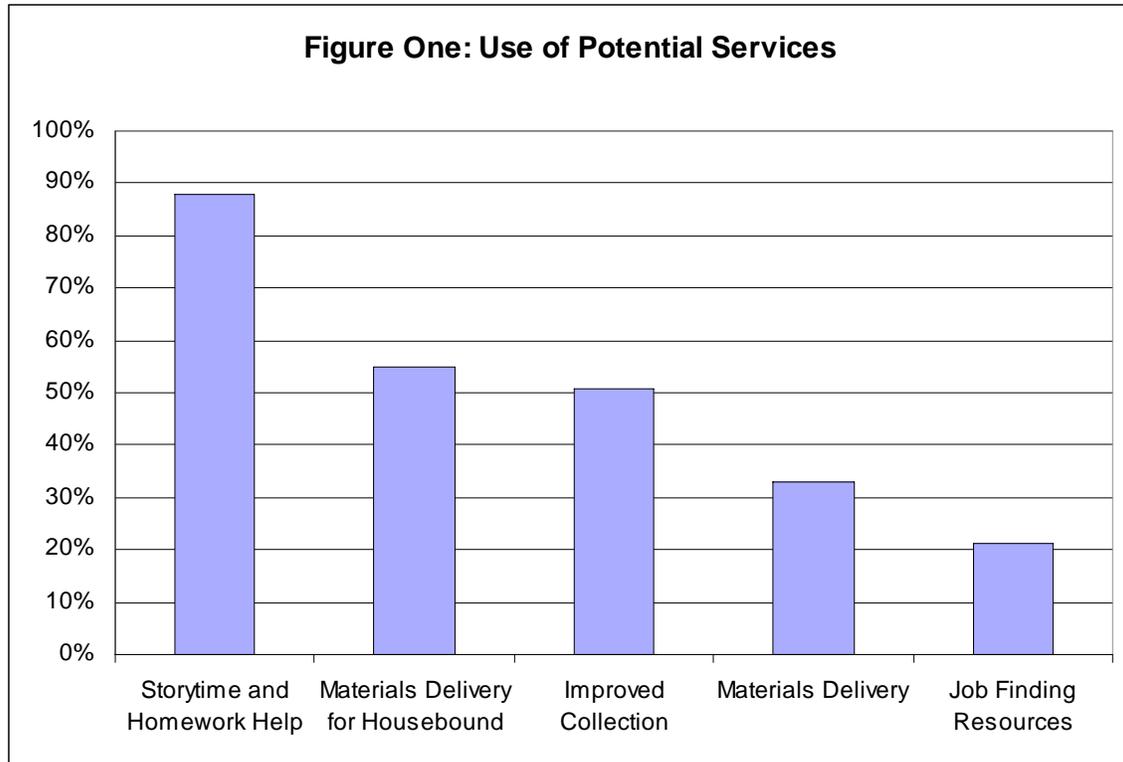
In addition to their use of the Sausalito Library, respondents were also asked about their use of other libraries near Sausalito. Many residents (38%) did use other libraries. The libraries most commonly used were Mill Valley (13%) and Marin (6%), but many other libraries were also mentioned, including Tiburon, Corte Madera, and San Rafael. See the Narrative section for more detail.

When asked why these other libraries were used, respondents gave very detailed replies. In particular, the collection and physical space at Mill Valley was said to be excellent by many people. Additionally, Mill Valley reportedly had a craft and puppeteer program for children. The Marin library was used by many respondents because of its location vis-à-vis their homes or travel routes. The other libraries were mainly used because of special circumstances, such as work location, or some specific collection attribute. See the Narrative section for more detail.

The Use of Potential Library Services

At this point in the survey, respondents were asked about library hours. The majority of respondents (65%) thought the current library hours were either “excellent” (27%) or “good” (39%), while less than 1% thought the current hours were “poor.” In addition, a majority of respondents (59%) thought it important that the library be open on Sunday.

Respondents were next asked a series of questions about their use of potential library services that are not now currently available and an improved library collection. See Figure 1 below for the percentage of respondents who said they would use these services and wanted an improved collection.



Two of the potential library services, the use of print and online services for job-hunting, and the use of fee-based home delivery of library materials were not generally desired by Sausalito residents. A majority of respondents, 79% and 65% respectively, said that they would not use either service. However, this disinterest in these two services was not shared by younger residents of Sausalito. A majority of respondents under age 30 said they would use each of these services, and in the case of fee-based delivery a majority of those age 30-44 would also use this service. The reason for this is most likely that younger residents are much more likely to be actively looking for jobs and also busy enough to want to use a materials delivery system. See Banner Tables 6 and 7 for more detail.

However, there were other services that Sausalito residents would use. Almost all respondents (88%) who were caregivers for children under 18 wanted the library to provide services for school-aged children. This was also true for residents who were housebound, or helped someone who was housebound. A majority of such respondents (55%) said they would use a fee-based system for the delivery of library materials.

In the same bank of questions respondents were asked if the library should improve its collection. A bare majority (51%) thought the collection should be improved, although 22% of respondents had no opinion on this issue. Even though in general a bare majority thought the collection should be improved, among younger respondents the desire to see the collection improved was much stronger. For example, 81% of respondents under age 30 thought the collection should be improved. See Banner Table 12 for more information.

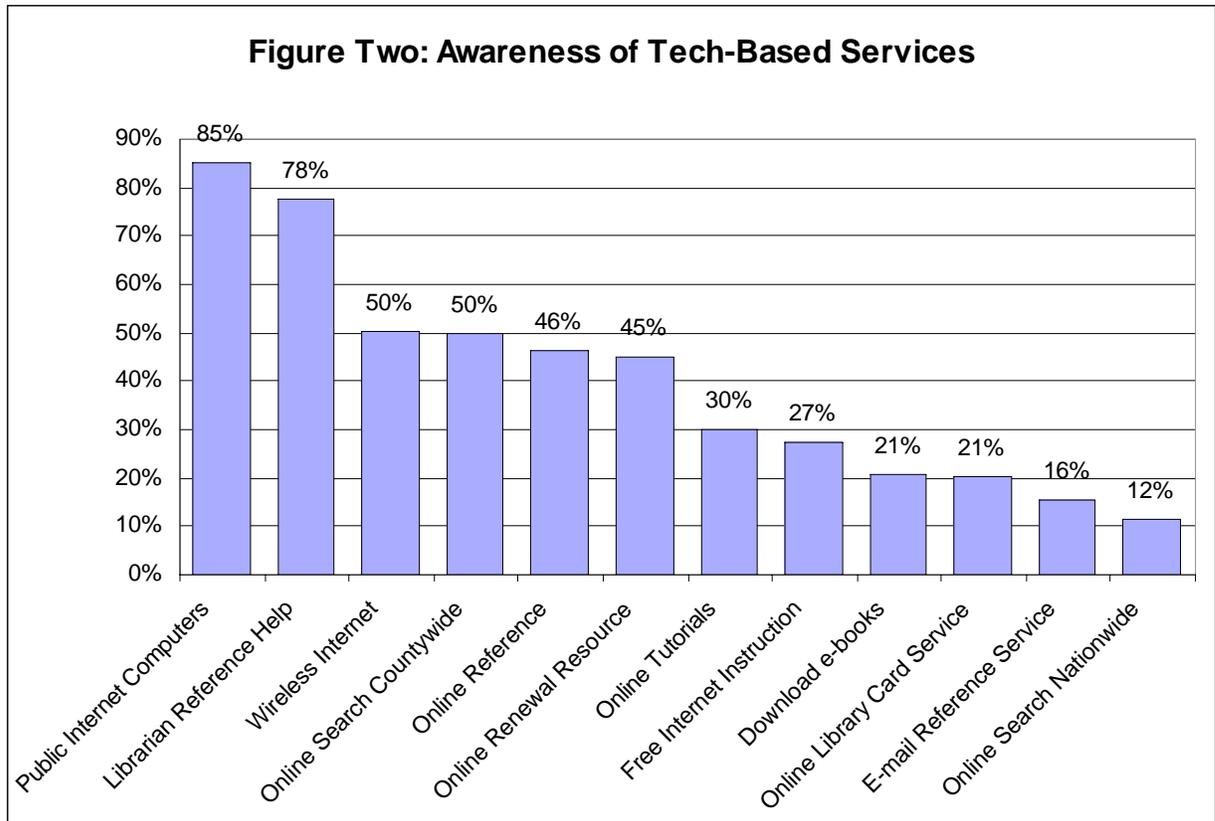
Quality of the Current Collection and the Library Space

Most Sausalito residents (56%) think the current library collection is either “excellent” (12%) or “good” (44%). However, a majority of residents (51%) would also like to see the collection improved. When asked how the collection could be improved, the majority of respondents mentioned additional books or DVDs. In particular, people wanted more current fiction and more local history books. Almost as commonly mentioned was a larger selection of magazines and an improved children's section. In addition, more technical books, more reference materials, and more art books were also mentioned. See the Narrative section for more information.

A majority of residents also think the physical space of the current library is either “excellent” (34%) or “good” (37%), while less than 3% think it is “poor.” However, as much as respondents liked the physical space of the current library, they also had many suggestions for how it could be improved. The most common suggestion was simply “more space.” Many people thought the chairs needed to be replaced and that there needed to be enlarged and separate areas for children. In addition, some people think that the old building the library is currently housed in caused problems, in particular with too many stairs to climb and with an antiquated air handling system and poor heating control. See the Narrative section for all suggestions.

Technology-Based Services

The Sausalito library offers a large number of technology-based services for patrons. To test for public awareness of these services, respondents were asked about their knowledge of each of 12 different services. Public awareness of the services ranged from a high of 85% for the fact that the library has public internet computers, to a low of less than 12% for the fact that Sausalito Library has nationwide online borrowing privileges. See Figure 2 below for percentage of respondents aware of each of the 12 services.



As can be seen from Figure 2, awareness of the technology-based services breaks into three rough categories. First are the two services that almost everyone knows about, public internet computers and help from librarians. The next group of four services (wireless access, online county-wide search, online reference, and online renewal) is known by approximately half of all residents. The final group of six services is known by less than a third of residents, and in many cases by only a very small minority of people.

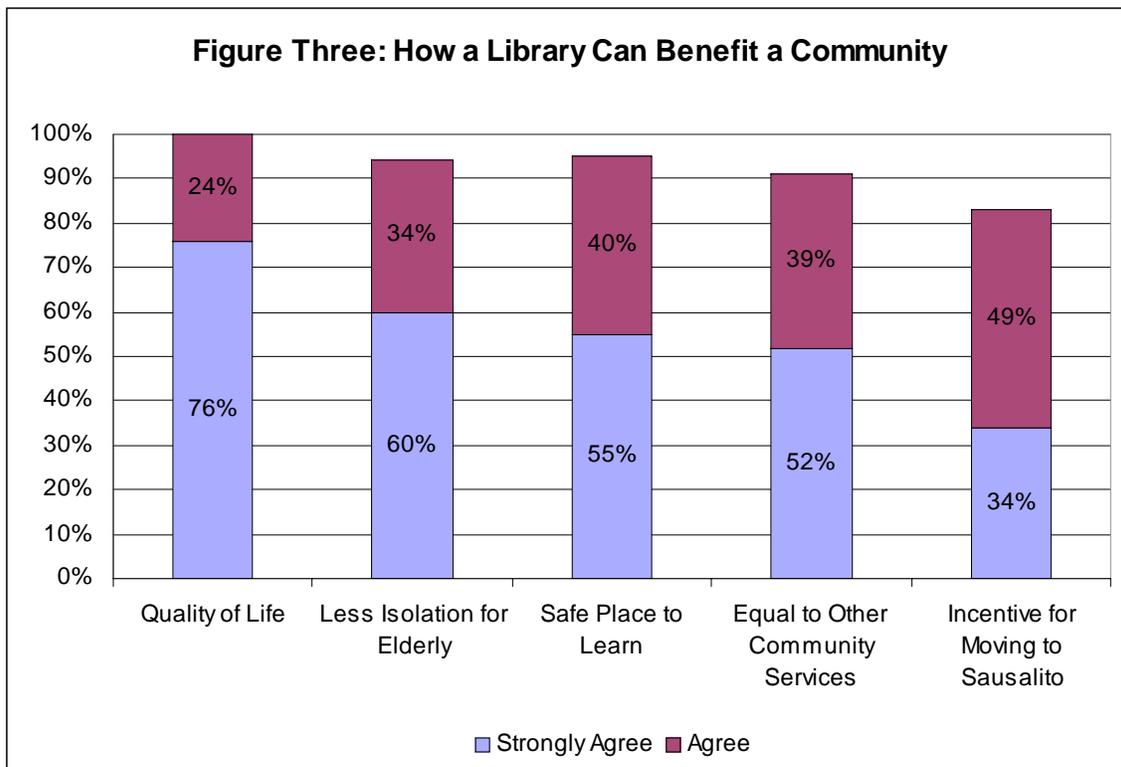
Awareness of technology-based services was in general much higher among younger users, in particular those under age 30, who were often more than twice as likely to be aware of a particular service. The only exception to this was for e-books and audio books, for which older respondents, who were more likely to use such services, were more aware of their existence. See Banner Tables 19 through 30 for more detail.

In addition to asking about awareness of 12 current technology-based services, respondents were also asked to suggest other technology capabilities the library should provide within the next few years. Many respondents were unable to offer any technology suggestions, typically claiming that they were not up-to-date on technology issues. However, for those who did offer suggestions, the most common was simply, “more computer stations.” Additional suggestions included downloadable books,

computer instruction, and online journals. See the Narrative section for the complete list of all suggestions.

The Library as a Community Asset

Public libraries are often thought of as a community asset because of the services they provide and the role they play in enriching the life of residents. In order to measure the extent to which Sausalito residents see their library in such a manner, respondents were read five positive statements about the role of the library in the community and asked for their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. There was overwhelming agreement with each of the five statements and in four of the five cases a majority of respondents “strongly agreed” with the statement. See Figure 3 below for the extent of agreement and strong agreement with each statement.



As you can see from Figure 3, residents of Sausalito highly value the ways in which the library can enhance the community, in particular the improvement a library offers the quality of life. This feeling was almost universal among those who use the library more than once a week (96%), or among those who use the library weekly (90%). See Banner Table 28.

Perhaps surprisingly, residents think of the library as an essential community service on par with other services, including public safety. This feeling that the library is equal to public safety and schools is more likely to be held by women (55%) than by men (46%). See Banner Table 32.

Respondents also expressed a similar feeling about the community-wide importance of the library when asked about the importance of the cultural enrichment programs the library offers, such as author visits. Sixty four percent of the public thought the cultural enrichment programs were “very important” and an additional 29% thought they were “important.”

When asked what other services the library should offer, respondents suggested more children's activities, the formation of different types of reading groups (in English and Spanish), a variety of movie night ideas, more forums and lectures on many different topics, many types of educational classes and lectures, and the creation of a coffee house. See the Narrative section for all the suggestions.

Support for a Special Library Tax

At the end of the survey respondents were asked if they would support a special tax if the City could not afford all the library services residents desired. Support for a library tax was an exceptionally high 78%, with only 16% in opposition. Support for a library tax was high among all segments of Sausalito, with support levels ranging from 81% to 86% among those younger than 44 and those who use the library frequently. In fact, even 75% of those who do not use the Sausalito library at all support a library tax. For more information see Banner Tables 1 and 33.

Conclusions

This survey shows a tremendous level of interest and support for the Sausalito Public Library. Respondents generally think the library's collection and physical space are good and that the library provides important services. Respondents think the library is a community asset and that the library enriches life in Sausalito. Support and interest in the library comes from all ages and from both men and women. At the same time library support levels are especially high among younger residents.

However, the residents of Sausalito would also like more from their library, including enlarged cultural and educational offerings, a larger and more varied collection, improved physical space and amenities, and more resources devoted to children.

Not only do residents of Sausalito love the library, but just as importantly, a very substantial majority say they would support a city tax devoted to library improvements. Although we did not measure the monetary limits of this willingness to pay more for library services, it would seem that a reasonable library tax, devoted to the improvements residents want, would stand a very good chance of passage at the ballot box.