

# Gibsons & District Public Library Community Feedback Study

Executive Summary

MAY 2012







## Introduction

In December 2011, almost 1,500 community members took the time to respond to a user or a non-user survey circulated by the Gibsons and District Public Library; 1,110 replied to the user survey while 382 completed the non-user survey. The thoughtful and considered comments and feedback from so many community members provided rich feedback on the types of services and resources that residents appreciate or want more of, the kinds of things that prevent them from using the Library, the things the Library are doing right and what needs improvement.

In order to best reflect the findings, a series of reports were produced. These include:

- An Executive Summary report
- A report on the Findings of the Survey of Library Users
- A report on the Findings of the Survey of Non-Users
- A report on the feedback of Library Users by Home Community
- A report of Sub-analysis across Key Measures
- A Technical Appendix containing the survey instruments and open ended feedback

This Executive Summary report provides an overview of the study including the method used, a summary of the key findings and recommendations stemming from these findings.

The report on the feedback from the Survey of Library Users provides feedback on the thoughts and opinions of residents who have used the Library in the past year in response to a series of open- and closed ended questions asked in the survey. The report on the feedback from the Survey of Non-users performed a similar function for those who indicated that they had not used the Library in the past year.



The large sample size of the user survey allowed for a report on Sub-group Analysis of Users by Home Community which was conducted to determine whether, and to what extent, there were significant differences across communities.

The large sample size also allowed for the production of a report which undertook Sub-analysis across Key Measures, examining in greater depth a number of specific areas which Library personnel were interested in exploring. These areas included:

- A comparison of users and non-users;
- The awareness of non-users of services available and barriers to use;
- Under-representation/under-represented groups at the Library;
- An examination of high school completion versus current student status;
- Feedback from non-users with potential interest in using the Library;
- Thematic synthesis of open-ended questions to determine whether new or different themes emerged when looking at the feedback to these questions across the survey; and,
- A discussion of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that the findings suggested.

The Technical Appendix contains the user- and non-user surveys and the feedback to the open-ended questions.

Across so many community members responding to open-ended and closed-ended questions in 2 distinct surveys, it was inevitable that a great deal of data would emerge. However, through all the rich and textured feedback received, some key themes and findings emerged. These key findings are discussed below following a brief description on the research method employed in this study.

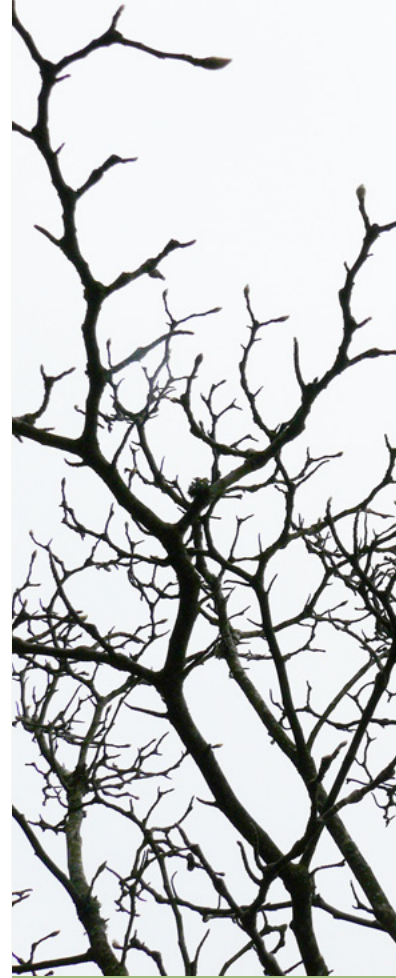


## Method

Early in this process, members of the research team discussed with Library personnel the areas of interest and the kinds of themes they most wanted to probe, both amongst current Library users, and also within the non-user population. In accordance with these discussions, draft surveys were drawn up and provided to Library personnel for review. After this iterative process, 2 final surveys (for Users and Non-users respectively) were created. Both surveys included open and closed-ended questions to ensure that the feedback received captured structured and unstructured feedback.

At the same time, a multi-pronged process was drawn up to gather community feedback via these two surveys. The surveys were made available online at the Library's website. Copies of the user and non-user surveys were mailed to households across the Library's catchment area along with a return envelope. Paper copies were made available at the Library as well as at a number of key locations across the Region. Finally, two researchers conducted intercept interviews over a 3 day period with residents in a number of locations. Not only did this range of methods for data collection ensure a high response rate, they also ensured that citizens of differing profiles and backgrounds had opportunities to participate, thereby further ensuring that the process for gathering feedback would be as representative as possible of the user and non-user groups within the community. A prize of either \$500 or an iPad was offered to thank community members for participating, and to help generate feedback from those who might not otherwise have participated.

In terms of representation in the survey of Library users, residents of the Town of Gibsons were modestly over-represented (40 per cent in the sample versus 34 per cent in the 2011 Census) while residents of all other areas were under-represented. Under-representation in Elphinstone, and West Howe Sound (including Keats and Gambier Islands) was modest, while under-representation among respondents from Roberts Creek was more pronounced (19 per cent in the user survey versus 25 per cent in the 2011 Census).





Map of Gibsons and District

A degree of under-representation was also noted in both the user and non-user survey amongst males and individuals under 40. Having noted this trend in the early feedback, reseachers conducting intercept interviews made particular efforts to administer the survey to younger individuals and males. Nevertheless, women and individuals over 40 remained somewhat over-represented in the final sample of both the user and non-user surveys.

## Summary of key findings

While the method for gathering feedback from community members included surveys of two distinct groups within the community, some clear themes and findings emerged. A summary of the key research findings is provided below. Greater detail can be found in the accompanying reports.



### *Much is working well*

The Library continues to work very well for many library users: When asked to provide comments on the services provided at the Library or through its website, three of the top five comment areas noted satisfaction with the Library; specific themes which ranked highly with patrons included happiness with the Library or its services generally, happiness with staff, and happiness with some specific service.

When asked to provide their final comments, the top two thoughts expressed were that respondents appreciate the Library and believe it provides a valuable service in the community, and that they value and appreciate the Library staff.

In addition, in response to closed ended questions in the user survey, 96 per cent of Library users felt the Library is largely or extremely welcoming while 91 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the availability for staff for assistance. An additional 81 per cent reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the Library layout and furnishings, 85 per cent with the book loan period, and 76 per cent with the book selection for adults.

Feedback of this nature suggests that the Library has many strengths and much good will in the community for which it can be justifiably proud and upon which it can continue to build.

### *Areas for future improvement*

When asked about possible improvements or enhancement to services, there were some areas where improvements or enhancements were consistently expressed.



### *Enhancements to the print and electronic collections*

Interest in an expanded range of print and electronic materials emerged as a strong priority in response to both open and closed-ended questions. When asked to list the top three things that would make the library better for them, expansion of the print collection and expansion of the electronic collection emerged as overwhelmingly important priorities.

In addition, in response to closed-ended questions on the user survey, 58 per cent expressed interest in digital movies and 51 per cent in digital music; while 61 per cent noted improvements to the adult book selection, 38 per cent mentioned a greater selection of DVDs, and 30 per cent indicated more downloadable e-books and audiobooks as a top or high priority. Many patrons expressed a specific interest in having more copies of new release books available as wait times were often considered prohibitive.

### *More programs/events/workshops*

When asked about the top three things they wished to see, more programs, events and workshops ranked highly, behind only an expansion to the print, and the electronic collections. And when asked to prioritize services in light of future budget decisions, 28 per cent reported that children or family events/programs were a top or high priority, 22 per cent mentioned more author or literary events, 17 per cent mentioned more workshops or craft programs/events, while 11 per cent mentioned more travelogue/slideshow events. Taken cumulatively, this suggests a significant appetite amongst respondents for the Library taking a central role in a highly visible, interactive, events-based community cultural life.

### *Other areas for improvement to services*

Other areas of note where respondents indicated a desire for improvements to services included:

- Improvements to the website
- Longer hours of service
- Training on how to browse resources and holdings/instructional podcast for using resources



In addition, it could be added that attracting people under the age of 40 could also be seen as an area for potential improvement as the survey response rate from this group was noticeably low.

### *Comparison between users and non-users*

There were modest differences noted between users and non-users. User respondents were more likely than non-users to:

- Be female
- Be 60 years of age or older
- Be a member of a couple (either with or without children)
- Be more likely to have children
- Be from 'middle income' households (from \$30,000 to \$99,999)
- Be university educated
- Have lived on the Sunshine Coast for 10 years or less

Non-user respondents were more likely than users to:

- Be male
- Be under 30 years of age
- Be a single adult
- Be less likely to have children
- Be from 'high income' households (\$100,000 or more)
- Have high school education or less, or a college diploma or trades/technical certificate
- Have lived on the Sunshine Coast for 20 years or more

The most striking of these findings is that which pertains to education levels: 41 per cent of Library users have a university degree compared to 24 per cent of non-users. At the same time, 23 per cent of non-users have a high school diploma or less while this was the case for only 12 per cent of users. This 'education gap' may be something the Library wishes to consider in the types of services and/or outreach it chooses to provide in the future.





### ***About the non-users***

General awareness of electronic services amongst non-users was strikingly low while interest in training was significant--27 per cent of non-users suggested they would be more likely to use the Library if they were offered more training. When asked if various services were offered or enhanced, between 30 per cent and 43 per cent of non-users reported interest in using the Library.

Non-users frequently expressed the idea that they had not been aware of the wide array of services provided by the Library and would be exploring their options at the Library more fully in the future in light of the fact. This feedback suggests that considerable interest exists within the non-user population for some of the very services that the Library is currently providing.

Given the apparent appetite among many non-users for a number of services provided by the Library, a thoughtful review of how the Library reaches out to the wider community, and what the key message(s) of any such outreach strategy should be, might be in order. For example, given the clear interest expressed by non-users in many of the existing services, one strategy could be to articulate to community members all that is available in the Library of today. Focussing on the interest expressed by many users and non-users alike in training on the Library's services and resources could also encourage interest.

At the same time, greater use of the Library by current non-users, while a laudable and desirable goal, would likely place further demand on the materials, resources and services of the Library. As well, given the lower levels of educational attainment witnessed within the non-user community, and the lesser familiarity most non-users have with Library services in general, this could necessitate not only a targeted outreach strategy to reach potential new users, but also a more robust training and information provision strategy as new users seek to engage these services.

### ***Differences across home communities***

In terms of representation in the survey of Library users, residents of the Town of Gibsons were over-represented (40 per cent in the sample versus 34 per cent in the 2011 Census) while residents of all other areas were under-represented. Under-representation in Elphinstone, and West Howe Sound (including Keats and Gambier Islands) was modest, while under-representation in respondents from Roberts Creek was more pronounced (19 per cent in the user survey versus 25 per cent in the 2011 Census).

Some modest differences in the profile of respondents across communities emerged and are detailed in the attached reports. However, these differences do not, by and large, appear to be statistically significant or of great importance to the strategic planning process.

The most interesting finding to emerge from an analysis of responses by home community came when questions about satisfaction with different Library services were clustered. Specifically, residents of Roberts Creek and West Howe Sound consistently expressed lower levels of satisfaction with the provision of a range of current services while residents of Gibsons and Elphinstone regularly expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the provision of these services. When asked about the degree of highest and least satisfaction across 20 individual Library services, Gibsons respondents were the most satisfied in 13 of the 20 services while Elphinstone respondents were most satisfied in 7 of the 20 services. Conversely, in terms of the level of least satisfaction with Library's services West Howe Sound respondents were least satisfied in 11 of the 20 service areas while Roberts Creek respondents were least satisfied in 9 of the 20 service areas. As noted, while the differences in levels of satisfaction were not always significant, the consistency with which residents of Gibsons and Elphinstone expressed higher levels of satisfaction, and to which residents of West Howe Sound and Roberts Creek expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction were striking and should be given some consideration in terms of strategies to ensure that all members of the community feel equally engaged by, and satisfied with the Library.





## Recommendations

While there are a number of areas where opportunities present themselves, it is also true that resources available to take advantage of these opportunities will be limited and that the Library will need to consider its options within this context. Following is a list of nine (9) recommendations which flow from the research findings. The recommendations are listed thematically.

### *Collections*

- i. Undertake a targeted expansion of the print collection including new release books*
- ii. Undertake a targeted expansion of the electronic collection*

Interest in enhancements to the collection, both print and electronic, as well as sufficient new release books to address demand, was resoundingly expressed in the user survey. While expanding the collection across a large number of areas would become financially prohibitive, the Library may wish to consider dedicating some resources to bolstering and up-dating the collection in key areas. Interest in new release books, for example, is high, as is interest in an expanded DVD collection. Any decisions may wish to take into account not only costs but also the profile of the intended audience of any new materials. Younger audiences, for example, may have a greater interest in certain genres of the print or electronic collections. Attracting new audiences may entail somewhat different selections than addressing the interests of regular users and this would be another thing for the Library to consider in making these choices.

### *Programming*

- iii. Develop an expanded events and programming schedule*

A clear desire by many individuals to see more programming, events and workshops was expressed in the survey feedback. While interests are no doubt greatly varied, a general interest in social and literary events, workshops and programs is palpable.



If the Library can become a genuine hub for such community energy, it could increase satisfaction of current users and attract new users who may not always find traditional services sufficient to draw them in for an initial visit. There may be opportunities, either independently or working with other cultural, artistic, literary, business, community or academic institutions and groups in the community, to develop a renewed programs and events agenda—one that, from the feedback received in the surveys, the community appears to be actively seeking.

### *Training*

*iv. Offer an enhanced program of training and orientation on Library services and resources which takes into account the needs of users and non-users, and which addresses potential barriers that many experience in seeking out assistance*

Training and information on the use of services and resources (particularly electronic) is another area of opportunity. As we all know, the world is changing rapidly and many people feel the challenge of keeping up with evolving technologies and applications. This challenge has been expressed as an impediment by a significant number of users and it is clear that many non-users also find this to be a challenge. Many regular users and residents are 60 years of age or older and may well appreciate support in this area to better utilize the full range of the Library's collection. This, of course, can apply to users and non-users of all age groups alike. Consideration of training and orientation within the context and spirit of regular community events/workshops could be looked into as an approach which may help bolster community appeal and perhaps even remove some of the stigma from Library users or potential users having to actively solicit assistance.





### *Website*

#### *v. Engage in improvements to the website to make it more user-friendly*

A number of survey respondents reported that the website was difficult to use or was visually unappealing. Given the inclination of growing numbers of people to use the Library's electronic portal for a variety of functions, it would be helpful for the Library to revamp its website, particularly if the Library wishes to use its website to communicate events, programs and workshops and training opportunities as part of an enhanced community activity agenda.

### *Hours of Operation*

#### *vi. Consider additional targeted hours of operation*

While there is already a solid base of hours of operation with the promise of Sunday openings resuming in the fall, interest expressed in the survey and the generally busy nature of peoples' lives suggest that an extension of hours (possibly Sunday afternoons and/or late into a week night evening) would be appreciated and may be something the Library might want to consider. An extension of hours at these times could be coordinated with a re-invigorated and well-publicized programming/events calendar which, taken together, could achieve a deeper engagement with groups, organizations and citizens across the community at large.

### *Outreach and Communications*

#### *vii. Develop and implement an updated communications strategy*

It is evident from survey feedback that many users are interested in attending community events and programs, while non-users frequently are often unaware of the wide array of services provided by the Library and would be keen to explore their options at the Library more fully in light of the range of services. Both groups frequently expressed interest in training opportunities.

Given these interests, considerable potential appears to exist to expand use of the Library and its services and resources. An updated communications strategy, working in concert with an enhanced website could prove to be beneficial if it were to clearly and effectively advise users of the training and programming opportunities available to them.

Equally, this strategy could be highly effective if it were to clearly articulate all the different services that are available in the Library of today. Needless to say, whether the focus of the strategy is to emphasize training opportunities, enhanced programming, the range of services available at the Library or any other service(s), care should be taken to develop the strategy's key message(s) such that they encourage and maximize community interest.

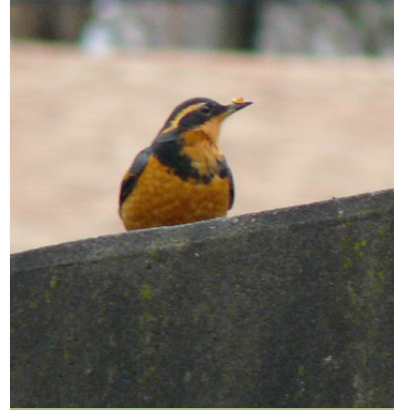
*viii. Consider strategies to engage youth and/or younger adults including enhancements to the electronic and print collections, and programming events and opportunities targeted to their needs and interests*


While most groups in the community appear to be well-served by the Library, if the sample was any indication, youth and younger adults were less engaged and less likely to use the Library than older adults. In terms of deepening interest from younger cohorts, targeted efforts could be made to expanding the types of items within the collection or the kinds of programs and services which would appeal to these groups. Dedicated youth events could also be considered as a way to enhance involvement with the Library.

*ix. Develop strategies to broaden engagement from residents from different home communities across the region*

Given the lower levels of satisfaction (and lower levels of Library use witnessed within the survey sample) of residents in some of the outlying communities, the Library may wish to consider strategies to broaden engagement by residents from these areas.

Occasional events celebrating different communities across the region could be considered. For example, an event targeted to the historic development and contributions of residents from West Howe Sound or Roberts Creek might help to broaden engagement of individuals from these communities.





If the cost or logistics are not prohibitive, the Library could also consider drop boxes at key points across the community. It could also consider extending the loan time, or offering a one time forgiveness for late returns, particularly for outlying areas like West Howe Sound. This, along with other possible initiatives to help ensure citizens from the more outlying areas that they are fully welcomed members of the Library community could help all community members feel that the Library is taking steps to ensure inclusivity for all it serves.

## Conclusions

Overall, the survey of Library users indicated that users are well aware that the Library is an important community resource and are, by and large, happy to indicate that they genuinely appreciate all that the Library is able to provide them. The feedback also makes clear that patrons have identified a core group of service areas where they wish to see enhancements, additions or improvements. Foremost amongst these appears to be the print and electronic collections, followed by enhanced programming, events and workshops, longer hours, improvements to the website and, for a considerable number of users and non-users, some type of training on how to best use the Library's resources.

Training on electronic and other services could be of particular importance given that feedback from both the user and non-user groups suggested significant appetite for this type of programming, as well as the indication (particularly amongst non-users) that levels of awareness of many electronic services are low, and that many observed that they would be more likely to visit the Library if they had training on its services.

Taking steps to engage under-represented groups in the community (by key demographic sub-groups such as younger adults and youth, by home community, and by the 'education gap' which emerged between users and non-users) may be other priorities for the Library to consider.

While fully addressing each of these interests within the budget available may be a significant challenge, it is clear that many people genuinely appreciate this valuable resource and wish to see it continue to play a central role in maintaining and enhancing the cultural vitality of the Region.



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