
Rural Information Needs and the Role of the Public Library

BERNARD VAVREK

ABSTRACT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE is to highlight some of the conditions affecting rural and small libraries in the United States and to describe their roles in providing information services. For many Americans, the community library continues to be viewed as a place for books and used primarily by women. This article also reviews the major findings of two research investigations conducted by the author under the sponsorship of the U. S. Department of Education.

INTRODUCTION

Whether it's the Grand Old Party, Windows (not the type one washes), or the Information Highway, metaphors have more than symbolic roles. In a time of intense societal reflection and use of the "r" words—i.e., reinvention, reorganization, etc.—looking for the proper metaphor to represent the rural public library has achieved a larger than life importance. This is particularly so in an information age where the institutional library is being swept away by the likes of Internet (Lewyn & Carey, 1994), online systems (Andrews, 1995), and a host of services that will be telephone-, cable-, or CD-ROM based (Markoff, 1995).

One suggestion that this author had as a new metaphor for the public library was "the information place." This idea was referred to some of my colleagues who judged it with polite neglect. My creative juices were excited, however, by comments in a new book entitled *Leadership and the Customer Revolution* (Heil et al., 1995). In one passage, the authors talked

about the role of information in an organization and stated, "information—and feedback in particular—is the true breakfast of champions" (p. 82). In many ways, one could argue convincingly that the public library in the United States fits this depiction. Have we not, for example, historically defined the public library as the "university of the people?"

Unfortunately, the typical public library is deficient in at least one component of achieving the "breakfast of champions" mantra—organizing feedback (from constituents). It has never been an institution where the solicited or unsolicited views of users has been important to its future. Oh, certainly, trustees, letters to the editor of the local newspaper, suggestion boxes, and surveys, have been utilized to transmit what the community thinks of its local library, but organized, systematic, and timely feedback has not been an important institutional goal. In a competitive society, no institution will survive unless it is able to actively evaluate its goals/objectives in the light of how well it provides needed services. It is surprising how long the community library has endured without those responsible paying much specific attention to their clients.

BACKGROUND

It was because of a concern for the lack of constituent feedback (on a national level) that the studies to be discussed in this article were undertaken. Both investigations were supported by grants received through the Public Library Program of the U. S. Department of Education under Title IIB of the Higher Education Act.

The need for these national investigations also resulted from the context that no studies of public library use have been conducted exclusively among nonmetropolitan audiences. Further, in modesty, no recent studies of public library use in the United States have taken on the dimensions of the research to be described in this article.

For example, D'Elia (1993) surveyed a little over 3,000 people, Estabrook's (1991) survey was limited to approximately 1,200 respondents, and Westin and Finger's (1991) survey was part of a general marketing survey compiled by Harris/Equifax with the data provided to the American Library Association rather than specifically being targeted as a study of library use.

In addition to the general opportunity of focusing on nonmetropolitan audiences, these investigations enabled the author to compare what may be described as the "library user" and "nonuser." While these concepts are obviously relative, the historical tendency of researchers, for a variety of reasons, has been to focus on library use. This is not surprising in that these data are the easiest to collect. Parenthetically, it should be noted that there is no greater challenge for all of public librarianship than to broaden the base of its constituencies. This can only be accomplished by a thorough review of the characteristics of those individuals who currently use the library and an equal understanding of

the needs of those folks who are not as yet "card carrying members of the library." Whether this rapprochement may be accomplished before the demise of the public library (as we know it) is a moot issue.

METHODOLOGY

The first study undertaken by the author at the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship resulted in the document, *Assessing the Information Needs of Rural Americans* (Vavrek, 1990). This comprised a national survey conducted among 300 public libraries in 1989 in nonmetropolitan communities of no larger than 25,000 people. In addition to using the concept of "nonmetropolitan" for statistical comparisons, the U. S. Bureau of the Census' definition of "rural," being a place of under 2,500 people, was also utilized. Approximately $n = 3,500$ usable surveys were collected from adult respondents (at least seventeen years old) who answered a broad range of questions from "why they were visiting the library" to a "specific identification of their information needs and reliance on the library to answer those needs." A complete copy of the survey instrument may be examined as Appendix A of this article.

The second investigation yielded the publication entitled, *Assessing the Role of the Rural Public Library* (Vavrek, 1993). In retrospect, the author admits that the titles of these two research documents probably should have been reversed. In any event, in the spring and early summer of 1991, $n = 5,676$ adults at least seventeen years old were phoned within the continental United States. Individuals were asked, for example, "the frequency that they used the services of their local public library," "reasons for nonuse," "information needs," etc. A copy of the survey instrument is attached to this article as Appendix B. Library Science students within the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, conducted the telephone interviews. This approach worked exceedingly well, and the cost was a fraction of what would have been charged by commercial research companies. Parenthetically, this methodology of using students was utilized largely because of the encouragement of Daryl Heasley, director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, who was a member of the research team.

Despite the growing number of answering machines, disconnected phones, and the general disinclination of individuals to respond to telephone inquiries, surveying efforts yielded a usable response rate of $n = 2,485$ (44 percent). Contributing to these highly satisfactory results—which exceeded the national average of 38 percent—was not only the excellent efforts displayed by the phone surveyors but also the positive effect of mailing introductory letters prior to the phone calls. While comparisons were not made to track a correlation between completed phone conversations and the availability of notification letters, clearly the letters helped. Timing was everything, however.

TRENDS

In an effort to provide a broader context to assist in the interpretation of the data generated in this article, the author will discuss the following trends of which the American public library is a part. These circumstances inexorably affect all public libraries in one degree or another.

Individualism

The public library, which developed as an agency of mass communication, must now cater to constituents who increasingly view themselves distinctly as individuals. In fact, one analyst refers to "individualism" as being the master trend of our time (Russell, 1993). Further, in relation to the ethnic backgrounds of these individuals, it is estimated that, in the near future, some states will be comprised mostly of minority populations. "Almost 25 percent of foreign-born Americans came to the United States between 1985 and 1990. Since 1960, the number of foreign-born residents has more than tripled from 1.5 million to 5.6 million" ("America's Colorful Heritage," 1993, p. 1). Small towns are also being affected by a "wave" of ethnic migration, but the circumstances are less pronounced. This diversity of constituencies is not only a problem in relation to the public library attempting to deliver services no longer to "mass audiences" but is compounded by the fact that the multiplication of specialty magazines, regionally oriented books, and special interest publications provide impossible challenges for public libraries to keep pace with information needs.

The Exodus to Rural Areas

In addition to client diversity, people are continuing to move away from metropolitan centers, where the public library movement began, in favor of the suburbs and unincorporated places that my friend Peirce Lewis refers to as "galactic cities." These latter are spread throughout the countryside, forming pockets of places where people live without a sense of corporate or personal community. While urban America now lives in the suburbs, the concepts of demography cannot always fully accommodate definitions of change. For example, as a part of suburban sprawl, "edge cities" are now a part of the new American frontier (Garreau, 1991). Likewise, in rural communities which become more and more difficult to discern from other places, Americans are moving further and further from the "downtown areas."

While public library systems have moved along with their clients via branch libraries as population centers have changed, and others have provided access in the form of dial-in telephone assistance, services to the homebound, etc., the concept of "going" to the library has been radically altered. Unfortunately, as communities of all sizes are perceived by their publics to be physically unsafe, citizens will continue to attempt to make their home as fortress-like as possible. Faith Popcorn (1991) and

others who talk about people "cocooning," attempt to encourage those responsible for all institutions to consider how traditional services will have to change to reach people where they live.

Convenience

While the business world understands the concepts of "convenience" and "saving time" for customers (thirty minute oil change, food delivered at home, ATMs, VCRs, pay-per-view television, etc.), the typical public library is only on the verge of using these principles in fashioning information services. It is this author's view that, as far as the public is concerned, the library is more a place than a service.

Public's Perception of the Library

The typical user continues to perceive the public library as a place of books. Consistently, public opinion research has reaffirmed the fact that bestsellers are more popular among library users than asking reference questions (Estabrook, 1991; Wittig, 1991; Vavrek, 1990a).

Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising, that, despite the continuum of resources available, the public library is not, as yet, at the top of the pecking order when the typical person is looking for information. The situation may be changing, however. When respondents were asked over the phone "If you wanted more information on the subject of protecting the environment...", about 22 percent indicated that they would "use the library." This response was only second to "ask a professional" (Vavrek, 1993). Unfortunately, when choices are reflected in the business world, the use of libraries as an information source finished thirteenth out of seventeenth in one recent investigation (Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 1990).

Resources of the Library

Despite the efforts of staff and the mix of resources available through the public library, only approximately half of the American public has either the time or the perceived need to use the library's services (Estabrook, 1991; Vavrek, 1993). While this latter comment may simply be another variation of whether the jar is half filled or half empty, the author is firmly convinced that one of the enduring problems is the public's continuing uncertainty of exactly what is available in the typical library. This situation can only be improved through daily public relations efforts. A justified concern, however, certainly has to be how much longer it will take to redress this long-playing problem. That is, a common refrain in "library land" has been that people simply do not know what is available in the library. A more important question relates to whose responsibility is it to fix this shortcoming?

Information Competition

Eventually librarians will be able to create an awareness among their clients about the services and resources available even in the smallest public institution. While this is happening, however, personal computers, data phones, cable television, electronic books, bulletin boards, and "900"

phone numbers—estimated now to be available through 300 newspapers (Piirto, 1993)—will make it increasingly difficult for the institutional library to compete. It is understood that not every American will be able to participate in this electronic Nirvana. In fact, “the mainstream online service user is forty years old, has a median household income of \$54,440, and is a college graduate. Of those who surf the Internet, the average age is thirty-four; men (75 percent) far outnumber women (25 percent)” (“Factoids,” 1995). But, as the information highway becomes more democratized, whether it is through the role of government or private enterprise, the public library as an institution is in jeopardy.

Library Funding

On matters of library funding, Holt (1992) has reminded us that, despite the efforts to be as diversified and responsive to human needs as possible, the dimensions of library economics and financial support are being eroded by the declining number of Americans who hold well-paying jobs, particularly professional, financial, and information-related ones. Further, to what extent will these individuals continue to want to support the public library? At the same time, public libraries cannot survive by only appealing to those who are least likely to be able to pay to support the library. While visions of the homeless person using the Internet to locate information is both compassionate and within the social role of the public library, can the library afford to provide this access?

Problems of Keeping Current

Directly related to the variety of complex problems waiting to be “fixed” is the tendency of public librarians to want to do everything. Attending programs of continuing education may be helpful to the intellect but they drive service-minded librarians to even greater heights of frustration by encouraging them to do more and more. While there is a great deal of discussion in the library community about marketing, it is badly understood in practice. Otherwise there would not be an accelerated effort to offer yet more and more diversified services particularly in the absence of client feedback—as noted earlier in this article. Marketers remind us that all institutions must carefully choose their major objectives in light of the fact that they operate within finite budgets.

While the above recitation of library issues is not complete, it is meant to suggest some of the forces pressing against the modern public library as it attempts to reinvent itself. Whether the library community can accommodate the challenges is a matter waiting for attention.

MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS

At this point, the author would like to highlight some of the major issues that surfaced as a consequence of the surveys associated with producing *Assessing the Information Needs of Rural Americans* (Vavrek, 1990a) and *Assessing the Role of the Rural Public Library* (Vavrek, 1993).

THE FEMALE FACTOR

While it has now become a popular topic repeated by this author in a variety of different contexts, survey results strongly "verified" the fact that women are the predominant users of the rural and small libraries of America (Vavrek, 1990a; 1993). This was true in seven out of ten cases. Parenthetically, in a similar study of library use conducted among Pennsylvanians in 1990, the number of female users was a rather remarkable 80 percent (Vavrek, 1990b). While the subject of the female-dominated use of the public library is not a totally settled issue for some individuals—two of the author's favorite researchers attribute it to surveying bias (Willits & Willits, 1989)—supporting evidence of this "female phenomenon" may be observed from a history of public library user studies (Knight & Nourse, 1969; Doremus Porter Novelli, 1987; North Dakota Library Association..., 1990). The propensity for women to be clients of the rural and small public library is not surprising; however, the disparity with male users is. A recent survey of bookmobile use in rural America shows the same pattern (Vavrek, 1992).

When the author began publicly reporting how singularly important women are in supporting the library, some colleagues expressed reservations about the survey results. These individuals were less distracted about surveying bias than wondering about the extent to which women in small and rural towns were on errands for the rest of the family unit. Since this criticism had the potential to undercut what this author determined to be a major research finding, another survey was conducted to clarify the original findings. A total of $n = 1,950$ questionnaires was collected from $n = 157$ libraries (Vavrek, 1990a). In only 28 percent of the cases, however, did the female respondents indicate that they were acquiring things for others. Their primary use of the library was to borrow books for themselves.

Notwithstanding defining national norms of library users, those responsible for library services at the local level must clearly be able to profile their clients on a regular basis and not merely by casual observation.

Parenthetically, this is not only a problem in the library community. In a recent survey of mall use, business people expressed the concern that they did not really know when their customers preferred to shop ("At Shopping Centers, Emphasis on Shopping," 1995). While profiling library clients presents a special challenge in the rural and small library because of limited staffing, it is a critical factor to being able to offer timely and needed information services. Likewise, if the female user predominates at the local community library level, one must not only attempt to recognize this circumstance but use the "female factor" as a source of lobbying efforts. At the same time, it would be an egregious error to depict women in small town America in a totally "romantic" and inaccurate fashion (e.g., as being similar to the television *Waltons*). With the growing number of single mothers and the overall percentage of women

in the work force, it is not surprising that they feel the greatest amount of stress and have less time for relaxation when compared with working fathers and the unmarried (Godbey & Graefe, 1993). Unless those responsible for the management of public libraries focus on the present and future role of women as library users, they may discover this user base will erode in the future.

Future library success (and the ability to survive) must be viewed as more than a matter of courting women, however. Specific effort must be aimed directly at expanding the base of support through an augmentation in the number and diversity of active library clients. As suggested earlier in this document, the sociological composition of the United States is accelerating. This is also characteristic of rural America.

FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USE

Trying to determine how frequently Americans use their public libraries appears to be no easy matter. For example, while Westin and Finger (1991) and Estabrook (1991) both employ the categories of "one to four times," "five to eleven times," and "twelve times or more during the past year" as their categories of library use, a variety of guideposts have been utilized by other researchers—including this author.

It is more than an academic matter that surveyors tabulate things in different arrays and those at the sideline cheer about disparate things. Westin and Finger (1991) have led those in leadership roles within the library community to boast about the fact that 66 percent of the American public uses their public library on an annual basis. While this apparently is an accurate statistic, it is based on the fact that 42 percent of those surveyed utilized their public library "twelve times or more" (with no further clarification) and 24 percent indicated a use of "five to eleven times during the past year." In the author's view, this really does not suggest the groundswell of populist support that some would wish. For example, by comparison, 69 percent of video watchers rent two or more movies a month ("Video Consumers would Rather Rent Movies...", 1993), 72 percent of the telephone households in the United States subscribe to cable television and have VCRs ("Electronic Media Users Use More," 1993), and "every day 77 percent of Americans aged twelve or older listens to the radio" (Piiro, 1994, p. 42). The author's intent is not to denigrate the survey results of other researchers but rather to suggest that the situation described earlier is symptomatic of the type of "competitive evidence" around which public librarianship is structured in the United States. Perhaps our difficulty, for example, in articulating the value of libraries to the public is that we do not really have a clue about the basic elements of comparison.

In *Assessing the Role of the Rural Public Library* (Vavrek, 1993), the optimist reading about the frequency of library use might postulate the fact that about 45 percent of the respondents are active users because of their

"daily" (2 percent), "weekly" (17 percent), and "monthly" (26 percent) habits. Other responses consisted of "annual" (24 percent), "fewer than annual" (16 percent), and "can't remember" (15 percent) usage patterns. This researcher's personal bias, as stated earlier, is that the monthly use of any institution does not place it in the popular and, therefore, important category. Wilkinson, for example, has talked about the importance of rural institutions, in particular, meeting community needs on a daily basis.

As a matter of comparison, the reader may be interested to know that in *Assessing the Information Needs of Rural Americans* (Vavrek, 1990a), 68 percent of those surveyed in the library indicated that they were weekly customers and 11 percent said that they used their public library on a daily basis.

OBSTACLES TO USE

As a means of determining some of the conditions that potentially prevent individuals from using their libraries on a more active basis, a set of questions was asked of the telephone respondents in *Assessing the Role of the Rural Public Library* (Vavrek, 1993). Options such as "lack of transportation," "hours are inconvenient," "library is too far away," etc., were among the alternative choices that those surveyed were offered. Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that the "lack of time" was either a definite "yes" or "somewhat a problem," and 38 percent of those surveyed indicated that "I have no need [to use the library]."

While perhaps it is not surprising that individuals perceive a lack of time to be a major obstacle to library use, since Americans view their situations as consisting of less time outside of work to pursue leisure activities (Godbey & Graefe, 1993), it is distressing that so many people responding indicated that they had no need to use the library. Estabrook (1991) also found that "a lack of time" and "no need" to be the top reasons for a lack of more aggressive library use.

Library science students who conducted the telephone interviews were upset with respondents who told them that they did not have any need for the library. After all, it is more than just a little deflating to be assured of the importance and significance of libraries in society through class discussions, examination of the professional literature, and so on, and then to be baptized into the real world of cynicism. Aside from the practical lesson, all of public librarianship needs to hear the same message: "I have no need." The reason for this, of course, is not to achieve some cruel thrill but rather to ensure the fact that those responsible are aware of the reasons for citizens' nonuse and to determine a course correction.

It is the author's impression that "no need" may really be a circumstance of those surveyed not being familiar enough with library services to be able to determine what is available to satisfy individual situations.

Supporting the author's assumption are the results of the following questions, which were asked of the telephone respondents: "Other than books, magazines, and newspapers, are you familiar with other materials or services that your public library has?" To this, 53 percent of those responding indicated "no." Although a respectable percentage of the respondents were aware of other things available at the library, a majority were not. Not surprisingly, through a cross tabulation of the data, library users are shown to respond more positively to this question than nonusers. That is, users are inclined to be more familiar with library services—i.e., other than newspapers, etc.—than nonusers (anyone who used the library less frequently than "monthly" was considered a nonuser).

"No need" may also be interpreted from the results of another question asked of those polled by phone. "When was the last time you saw or heard any type of advertising about your public library or its services?" Only 36 percent of the respondents (who represent "daily," "weekly," and "monthly" users) reported hearing or seeing any communication (advertising) from the public library within the last year. A cross tabulation of these data, not surprisingly, shows that users more frequently than nonusers reported an awareness of library public relations efforts.

Specialists remind us, of course, that channels of communication are used selectively. That is, we tend to hear and read those things which are consistent with our own beliefs and vice versa. The implication, therefore, is that those who are primed to use the library and its services are tuned in and interested in what is going on. The reverse is true as well.

The earlier commentary would seem to suggest that an active public relations campaign, if not a marketing effort, is very much needed in rural and small public libraries around the United States. At the same time, it should be understood that, not only because of a limitation of staffing but because of the variety of resources available at the smallest library, the process of advertising is not as simple as it would otherwise seem. Library customers, no more so than those utilizing the services of other institutions, are not concerned about the abstraction of the public library—for example, as a societal institution—but rather are confronted with the practical reality of finding answers to practical questions/problems or to satisfy other immediate informational needs. The focus of library advertising (the term "marketing" is preferred) is to ensure the fact that it is constant and that as many avenues of the marketing mix are used as possible—local radio announcements, press releases, cable television promotions, printed brochures, posters, handouts at the grocery store, presentations at service organizations and at other civic groups, etc. Challenging the speedy adoption of marketing efforts is both the insufficient availability of staff members (or volunteers) and an absence of how-to-do-it techniques.

INFORMATION NEEDS

As with most things in life, attempting to identify the information needs of Americans living in nonmetropolitan areas of the United States proved a considerable challenge. Along the way, professional self-doubt

“reared its ugly head” with concerns such as, do individuals really think about the information they need in any systematic fashion? The research reported in this document does not answer that question. It is the author’s impression, however that, while the typical American would have difficulty functioning without access to the answers to things—“When does the post office open?” “What time does the mall close?” “What’s on TV tonight?”—one is really not conditioned to think of “information” either in a conceptual fashion or as a product. Added to this uncertainty was also the matter of being able to determine the degree to which the public library could provide services.

By comparing Appendixes A and B of this document, the reader will note that, in both surveys, library users and telephone respondents were asked to identify their daily information needs and the extent to which the library provided information on those topics. Because of the different format in the two surveys, the investigation conducted in the library (Appendix A) used a scale which was determined to be too involved to use in the telephone survey. Phone respondents were asked to answer with “yes,” “no,” or “somewhat” to the question of whether or not they used the library for gathering information on certain topics.

The two surveys resulted in different things being identified by those participating as top choices, but the margins of difference were slight. For example, Appendix A illustrates that those surveyed in the library were interested in “bestsellers” as their number one choice followed by “national news” and “local news.” Phone respondents (Appendix B) indicated greatest enthusiasm for “national news,” “local news,” and “decisions of local governments,” respectively. “Bestsellers” as a choice for phone respondents was low in the pecking order of importance. This difference between the two surveys may be partially explained by the fact that it was determined that library users read seven books a month, and the phone respondents (representing a more generic audience, the non-user) read only three books a month.

Survey participants identified other categories as important daily information needs, however, in addition to those things mentioned earlier. They include “social services,” “programs of education,” “health/medical services,” etc. On these informational matters of a more timely framework (as opposed to bestsellers and reference books), the library was not utilized as frequently as it should be in providing services. To cite two illustrative examples from the phone survey, first (the reader will be able to make additional comparisons by consulting the Appendixes), 48 percent of the respondents indicated that information on “health/medical services” was important to them, but in only 25 percent of the instances did the library ever provide information to them on those related

topics; second, 31 percent of those surveyed identified "local social services" as a daily information need. However, in only 12 percent of the circumstances was the library utilized. The same disparities may also be visualized by referring to Appendix A, which highlights the survey of library users.

In respect to the above discussion, librarians in rural and small public libraries must attempt to recognize the differences between the informational needs of their customers and the extent to which these same individuals rely on the library to satisfy those needs. The examples of information needs discussed earlier require library staff to acquire or access data that are out of the book trade in ease of collecting. It means contacting and going to community agencies, local government, health services, etc., to acquire current information and to organize these things in formats that the public will find practical to utilize. It is hoped that the growth of electronic community networks, free nets, etc., will provide a facility that enables differences between information needs and information services to be mitigated. Actions, regardless to the extent to which they are dynamic, will again fall short of target markets if there is not a commensurate effort at advertising.

WISH LIST

Phone respondents were asked, "If the public library could provide the following services [computerized information, books-on-tape, literacy services, day care services, activities for senior citizens, job training], would you be interested?" To this, 54 percent of the respondents answered either "yes" or "somewhat" to the category of "computerized information." The next highest positive response rate (39 percent) was for "job training." Additional answers may be found in Appendix B.

While the above question and subsequent responses were offered with the sense of attempting to gauge emerging services, individuals could luxuriate in their choices as a "wish list." Since there was no penalty for choosing all of the above options, one might have anticipated that respondents would have said "yes" to everything. That clearly was not the case, however. Should it be surprising that slightly over half of those surveyed by telephone indicated that they would use computerized services at their library if these were available? Probably not—aren't we all rolling down the information highway?

Depending on the resources that one uses, the family "truckster" (online services used at home) accounts for anywhere from 20 percent to 30 percent of the vehicles on the I-bahn. Present concerns, of course, not only relate to the manner in which NREN, the National Research and Education Network (the Internet), will progress, but the manner in which the typical American (who presently is without a computer and technical experience) will be able to participate in the glories of "gophering." Providing services to the have-nots of America has always

been an enthusiastic mission for librarians. It is not surprising, then, that the information society has provided a new vigor for an old pursuit. The problem is, however, that the typical rural library does not necessarily have the equipment appropriate for info-surfing, and the cumulative effect of what we presently consider to be the information highway is a totally new experience. One, for example, should not necessarily assume that future information access will be made through the institutional library rather than directly by consumers. It will only be through the immediate action of the library community that its integral role will be ensured.

ACCOMMODATING THE FUTURE

It is hoped that the world of assessing rural information needs was helped by the studies reported in this article. Needed now is an encouragement to individuals at the local level to begin their analysis of constituent service requirements. In the absence of a national library movement, one is reminded that "all politics are local." Hindering the local assessment of data is an immense problem—the typical librarian in a rural or small community may lack the technical knowledge of how to collect the information that is particularly important. While visions of other things (all electronic) distract library leaders, much of the necessary infrastructure for the future success of rural and small public libraries is not, as yet, in place. "How to develop goals and objectives," "techniques of evaluation," and "needs assessment" are among the priorities waiting for concentrated attention. If only the library community could commit itself to specific things once in a while, instead of attempting to do everything. Priority attention must be given by state library agencies, library districts, consortia, etc., to those matters which are basic to the effective functioning of the library. Taming the Internet will wait in favor of more immediate targets.

While it will come as no surprise to the reader, public library leadership and services around the United States vary considerably. In those rural and small towns that are not fortunate enough to be part of some larger library system, or in states where there is inadequate growth potential, it must be clear to those who are responsible for public library services that they are on their own. And if ever the spirit of "we can do it" needs to surface, it is now. Stripped of their "glamour," small communities are faced with a regiment of problems—waste disposal, health services, and coping with a world economy—to name a few. It will only be through the action of community leaders that the community itself, and its community information center (the library) will survive.

As a continuation of the discussion above, library staff in rural and small libraries must understand their responsibilities in promoting community development. In many places throughout the United States, the

local library is seen as a heroic but stereotypical institution—a place for books, children, and women. While promoting literacy among all constituent groups is an admirable goal, there will be no future library unless all segments of the body politic contribute to the cultural and economic development of the community. The American public library must not only be perceived as an active element of promoting community growth, it must function as such.

In many places, rural and small libraries have benefitted enormously from the application of technology. Just a few years ago, for example, discussing the implementation of automated services in a small library was almost a financial impossibility. Now, one has a choice of vendors. Likewise, insightful library network administrators throughout the United States have enabled the smallest institution to be brought into the electronic big leagues. At the same time, while it is an inescapable construct of competition with other community agencies—as well as good sense—it must be clear that the library cannot win the technology game. Its fiscal pockets are not deep enough. Perhaps it sounds foolish to offer admonishment and congratulations at the same time. But at the community level, there should be particular care taken that the local library is not transformed into an electronic shell game. The community library must continue to be a meeting place for people, a source for relevant programming, as well as a clearinghouse for providing timely access to information. Although it may strike the reader as a naïve comment, the application of technology should not distract those responsible for the management of the public library from more important issues.

While it is difficult to escape the significance of financial support as a major hedge against library development, the correlative issues of education and training are equally extenuating. For the nonmetropolitan areas used in this document (that is, populations up to 25,000), only 21 percent of the librarians in those places have completed their first professional library degree. In populations of fewer than 2,500 people, only 4 percent of the librarians have academic training (Chute, 1993, p. 30). It is the author's view that unless the schools of library and information science begin to assert a stronger leadership role in providing for the educational and training needs of librarians and those seeking to become librarians—particularly in geographically remote areas—large libraries and library systems will begin training and educating their own staff members. There are already examples of this occurring. Further, the most significant impediment to the application of new technology is the inability of practitioners to stay current and utilize what already is available. While this latter problem is endemic to an information society, acknowledging it is not the same as being able to develop strategies to overcome it. Librarians and support staff in small and rural libraries are particularly vulnerable owing to the lack of training mentors and ready access to

technicians. A case in point that came to this author's attention was an organization that was attempting to deliver a teleconferenced program to a variety of downlink sites but failed because the local librarians were unaware of how to go about adjusting the receivers to a new frequency. Equally poignant examples exist when library staffers attend Internet workshops, for example, but have neither the equipment nor time to practice their new skills.

CONCLUSION

As a way of ending, the author would offer the following quotation:

By no means are paper or books or libraries going to disappear completely. But their traditional presence and significance in our culture, and the degree to which they've informed our concepts of self, identity, and consciousness, seem poised to fade as seemingly cheaper, less polluting, more flexible, and more attention-grabbing digital media come to the fore. (Verity, 1994, p. 12)

The concept of library has been radically changed in a short time. Clearly, the Internet is an example of the new librarianship. Despite the accomplishments and challenges of technology, however, the rural librarian has a more immediate concern—survival of the community. It is critical that this basic concept be understood and action taken.

APPENDIX A

ASSESSING THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF RURAL AMERICANS

Q.1 On a day-to-day basis, how important is it to you to have information on the following topics?

	<i>Frequency</i>					
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6*</i>
Hobby/crafts	680	533	870	619	581	248
Local business/investment	943	716	749	433	344	346
Action of govt officials	612	570	812	583	617	337
How to do it/reference	381	422	761	837	821	309
Legal matters	992	706	796	421	293	323
Local history/genealogy	645	602	777	590	652	265
Local news	349	351	628	775	1,172	256
National news	304	293	662	778	1,236	258
Health/medical services	335	407	787	858	865	279
Current decisions of local government	475	466	771	709	824	286
Matters of self-improvement	334	368	893	863	803	270
Getting or changing jobs	1,197	502	678	441	366	347
Local community events	374	429	880	841	732	275
Programs of education	348	322	729	819	1,020	293
Local social services	735	566	897	595	447	291
Best sellers	391	361	603	602	1,377	197
Local ordinances/laws	583	577	889	653	507	322
Videocassettes	890	469	696	549	581	346
Computers	1,075	495	635	475	458	391
Others	162	26	43	61	275	2,964

*1=least important

Q.2 What do you think should be the most important goal of this library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Sponsor programs	53	1.6
b. To provide information	2,069	61.6
c. Services for children	321	9.6
d. To provide a quiet place	78	2.3
e. Leisure materials (books, mag.)	816	24.3
f. Leisure materials (tapes, etc.)	24	0.7
No response	170	

Q.3 How often do you come to this library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Daily	375	10.9
b. Weekly	2,357	68.4
c. Monthly	569	16.5
d. Rarely	118	3.4
e. First time today	27	0.8
No response	85	

Q.4 What was the major reason for coming to the library today?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Children's services/materials	321	9.4
b. Magazines	122	3.6
c. Newspapers	136	4.0
d. Return materials	322	9.4
e. Information/reference	518	15.1
f. Leisure materials—print—books	1,278	37.3
g. Leisure materials—nonprint	87	2.5
h. School assignment	172	5.0
i. Photocopying	47	1.4
j. Browsing	22	0.6
k. Tutoring/instructional services	22	0.6
l. Heating/air conditioning		
m. Place to relax	44	1.3
n. Place to hold meeting	47	1.4
o. Other	287	8.4
No response or miscode	106	

Q.5 Did this library provide what you needed today?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Yes	3,166	91.4
b. No	43	1.2
c. To some degree	254	7.3
Blank or miscode	68	

Q.6 Was your reason for coming to the library today typical of why you usually come to the library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Yes	2,656	77.0
b. No	290	8.4
c. To some degree	501	14.5
No response or miscode	83	

Q.7 If you answered "no" or "to some degree," what was different about your reason for coming to this library today?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Lack of time for typical usage	24	2.7
b. Change in materials selected	412	47.1
c. Meeting	22	2.5
d. Study	30	3.4
e. Other	287	32.8
Missing or miscode	2,756	

Most people were routed around this item.

Q.8 Would you be willing to pay a fee for the library services that you received today?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Yes	1,497	43.7
b. No	815	23.8
c. To some degree	1,114	32.5
No response or miscode	105	

Q.9 If you had to pay a fee for the services that you received today, how much would you be willing to pay?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Less than \$1.00	1,527	48.9
b. \$1.00-\$1.99	978	31.3
c. \$2.00-\$2.99	315	10.1
d. \$3.00-\$3.99	81	2.6
e. More than \$4.00	233	7.1
No response or miscode	406	

Q.10 How important is this library to you in providing information on:

	<i>Frequency</i>					
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6*</i>
Matters of self improvement	523	425	836	735	664	348
Local business/investment	1,038	708	757	364	232	432
Local social services	946	668	798	399	267	453
Best-sellers	346	275	478	598	1,545	289
Action of government officials	814	547	823	517	405	425
Hobby/crafts	565	398	742	737	765	324
Videocassettes	1,147	443	568	434	500	439
Local history/genealogy	600	541	779	602	634	375
Getting or changing jobs	1,287	544	638	358	260	444
Reference books	201	158	539	768	1,568	297
Computers	1,371	421	527	370	391	451
How to do it/reference	421	337	699	736	934	404
Local ordinances/laws	846	631	811	460	314	469
Legal matters	973	688	770	403	245	452
Local news	767	455	704	562	657	386
National news	715	450	697	575	713	381
Programs of education	540	377	760	697	758	399
Health/medical services	629	472	844	637	549	400
Current decision of local government	773	616	758	492	417	475
Other	188	31	59	49	229	2,975

*1 = least important

Q.11 Do you feel you have information needs which cannot be met at this library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Yes	524	15.5
b. No	2,400	71.1
c. To some degree	446	13.2
No response or miscode	161	

Q.12 If you answered "yes" or "to some degree," list up to three of these unmet information needs.

	<i>Frequency</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	
More specific reference books	205	53	21	279
Religious materials	23	14	4	41
Medical/health	25	8	9	42
Self-help/self-instruction	33	36	11	80
Science/technology	50	23	8	81
Genealogy	37	9	4	50
National newspapers	18	10	7	35
Better periodicals/more periodicals	42	40	14	96
Current politics/current events	21	3	3	27
History	31	15	7	53
Best-sellers	17	19	6	42
Science fiction	5	6		11
Career information	12	4	3	19
Online systems	11	8	3	21
Other	329	168	81	578
No response	2,672	3,112	3,347	

Four people listed four needs. They would add one to the counts for "periodicals" and "online systems" and two to "other."

Q.13 How quickly are you able to obtain the materials that you need at this library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. That day	1,959	59.9
b. Within a week	886	27.1
c. Within 2 weeks	371	11.3
d. Longer than 2 weeks	47	1.4
No response	268	

Q.14 If you wanted to change one thing about this library, what would it be?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Larger building	456	22.1
Larger selection of materials	287	13.9
More current materials	98	4.7
Open more hours	280	13.6
Open fewer hours	2	0.1
Quiet area needed	79	3.8
More science fiction	6	0.3
More newspapers	8	0.4
Have meeting rooms	6	0.3
More microfilm readers	8	0.4
More non-fiction	19	0.9
Expand reference collection	55	2.7
Video availability	41	2.0
More recorded music	12	0.6
Have computers	37	1.8
Make it easier to find materials	13	0.6
Handicapped access to all levels	5	0.2
Better floor plan	20	1.0
Large print materials	2	0.1
Other	558	27.0
No response	1,536	

Q.15 How important is this library to the well-being of your community?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Not important	5	0.1
b. Somewhat important	85	2.4
c. Important	601	17.3
d. Highly important	1,671	48.0
e. Critically important	1,117	32.1
No response or miscode	52	

Q.16 In overall services, rate this library.

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Poor	5	0.1
b. Fair	113	3.3
c. Good	1,257	36.2
d. Excellent	2,094	60.4
No response or miscode	62	

Q.17 In addition to the library, where else do you regularly get information to answer your questions?

	<i>Frequency</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	
a. Newspapers	653	371	137	1,161
b. Word of mouth	199	206	209	614
c. Professionals	96	88	61	245
d. Own books, magazines, etc.	562	470	284	1,316
e. T.V.	267	322	186	775
f. Other libraries	481	223	106	810
g. Gov't agencies non-profit org.	238	146	76	460
h. Bookstores	104	85	45	234
i. Seminars/workshops	4	8	13	25
j. Other	111	134	143	388
No response or miscode	816	1,478	2,271	

Q.17 total includes responses from respondents who provided more than three information sources.

Q.18 Over the last six months, how many books have you read?

Number of respondents = 3293
 Mean = 41.5
 SD = 73.5
 Min = 0
 Max = 999

Q.19 Do you read any magazines on a regular basis?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Yes	2,753	81.9
b. No	608	18.1
No response or miscode	170	

Q.20 If "yes," which do you regularly read?

	<i>Frequency</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	
a. Family life	716	643	508	1,867
b. News	596	404	281	1,281
c. Lifestyles	560	572	444	1,576
d. Nature	223	240	220	683
e. Consumer	27	39	33	99
f. Religion	87	70	62	219
g. Financial	78	72	52	202
h. Computers	26	23	23	72
i. Hobbies	300	314	328	942
j. Professional journals	95	93	72	260
k. Assn. Soc. J.	14	21	18	53
l. Other	68	70	66	204
No response	741	970		1,424

Q. 21 Do you belong to any community or social organizations?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Yes	1,600	48.9
b. No	1,665	50.9
No response or miscode	266	

Q.22 If you answered "yes," please list the organizations to which you belong.

	<i>Frequency</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	
a. Elected/app. local gov't	40	15	15	70
b. Church	320	151	76	547
c. Civic group—multipurpose	227	78	56	361
d. Special interest—single purpose	799	570	306	1,675
e. Youth/children	90	67	38	195
f. Lodges/fraternities	81	79	33	193
g. Other	57	51	19	127
No response	1,917	2,520	2,988	

Q.23 Annually, how much would you estimate that your community spends per person to support this library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. < \$1.00	459	16.2
b. \$1.00-\$1.99	456	16.1
c. \$2.00-\$2.99	573	20.2
d. \$3.00-\$3.99	351	12.4
e. More than \$4.00	978	34.5
No response or miscode	714	

Q.24 Annually, what would you consider to be the ideal level of community support per person for this library?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. < \$1.00	88	3.1
b. \$1.00-\$1.99	213	7.5

42 LIBRARY TRENDS/SUMMER 1995

c. \$2.00-\$2.99	393	13.8
d. \$3.00-\$3.99	438	15.4
e. More than \$4.00	1,699	59.7
No response or miscode	700	

Q.25 My occupation is:

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Professional	713	21.1
b. Technical & skilled labor	299	8.9
c. Clerical	217	6.4
d. Service worker	102	3.0
e. Student	316	9.4
f. Homemaker	852	25.2
g. Retired	669	19.8
h. Laborer	92	2.7
i. Other	118	3.5
No response or miscode	153	

Q.26 My age is:

N = 3377
 Mean = 44.7
 SD = 17.1
 Min = 0
 Max = 87

Q.27 My gender is:

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. Female	2,526	72.8
b. Male	943	27.2
No response or miscode	62	

Q.28 My highest level of schooling is:

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
a. 1-6 grade school	30	0.9
b. 7-8 jr. high	70	2.0
c. 9-11 high school	188	5.5
d. 12 high school grad/G.E.D.	1,229	36.0
e. Tech./trade/business school/A.A.	459	13.4
f. B.A./B.S.	885	25.9
g. Master's	343	10.0
h. Doctorate, M.D., D.V.M., D.D.S.	40	1.2
i. Other	170	5.0
No response	117	

APPENDIX B

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

The following data represent the preliminary results of a national telephone survey conducted among $n = 5,676$ adults residing in nonmetropolitan areas in the United States during the period of February-June, 1991. The usable response rate was $n = 2,485$ (44%). This research was supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Public Library Programs.

Q1. Please indicate your age, at your nearest birthday, according to the following categories:

- Female: 1,653 respondents, 66.3%
- Male: 832 respondents, 33.4%
- a. 17-26, 315 respondents, 12.6%
- b. 27-36, 529 respondents, 21.2%
- c. 37-46, 549 respondents, 22.0%
- d. 47-56, 314 respondents, 12.6%
- e. Over 56, 781 respondents, 31.3%

Q2. How often do you use your public library or its services?

- a. *daily*, 46 respondents, 1.8%
- b. *weekly*, 387 respondents, 15.5%
- c. *monthly*, 582 respondents, 23.3%
- d. *once a year*, 38 respondents, 21.6%
- e. *less than once a year*, 372 respondents, 14.9%
- f. *don't know/can't remember*, 353 respondents, 14.2%

Q3. We realize that there are lots of reasons that people don't use their public library more often. Are the following concerns to you?

- a. *library is too far away*
 - Yes: 357 respondents, 14.3%
 - No: 2,059 respondents, 82.6%
 - Somewhat: 69 respondents, 2.8%
- b. *no transportation*
 - Yes: 148 respondents, 5.9%
 - No: 2,301 respondents, 92.3%
 - Somewhat: 33 respondents, 1.3%
- c. *hours are inconvenient*
 - Yes: 467 respondents, 18.7%
 - No: 1,796 respondents, 72.0%
 - Somewhat: 213 respondents, 8.5%
- d. *it doesn't have what I want*
 - Yes: 321 respondents, 12.9%
 - No: 1,930 respondents, 77.4%
 - Somewhat: 220 respondents, 8.8%
- e. *I have no need*
 - Yes: 755 respondents, 30.3%
 - No: 1,530 respondents, 61.4%
 - Somewhat: 198 respondents, 7.9%
- f. *not sure of what's there*
 - Yes: 386 respondents, 15.5%
 - No: 1,938 respondents, 77.7%
 - Somewhat: 153 respondents, 6.1%

- g. *staff is unpleasant*
 Yes: 64 respondents, 2.6%
 No: 2,367 respondents, 94.9%
 Somewhat: 37 respondents, 1.5%
- h. *not enough time*
 Yes: 1,181 respondents, 47.4%
 No: 1,121 respondents, 45.0%
 Somewhat: 170 respondents, 6.8%
- i. *I need to brush-up on my reading*
 Yes: 506 respondents, 20.3%
 No: 1,882 respondents, 75.5%
 Somewhat: 69 respondents, 2.8%
- j. *I am physically unable*
 Yes: 104 respondents, 4.2%
 No: 2,346 respondents, 94.1%
 Somewhat: 20 respondents, .8%
- k. *I use other libraries*
 Yes: 557 respondents, 22.3%
 No: 1,834 respondents, 73.6%
 Somewhat: 75 respondents, 3.0%

Q4. If your public library could provide the following services, would you be interested in them?

- a. *computerized information*
 Yes: 1,189 respondents, 47.7%
 No: 962 respondents, 38.6%
 Somewhat: 174 respondents, 7.0%
 Available Now: 145 respondents, 5.8%
- b. *books-on-tape*
 Yes: 921 respondents, 36.9%
 No: 1,307 respondents, 52.4%
 Somewhat: 118 respondents, 4.7%
 Available Now: 125 respondents, 5.0%
- c. *literacy services*
 Yes: 569 respondents, 22.8%
 No: 1,684 respondents, 67.5%
 Somewhat: 123 respondents, 4.9%
 Available Now: 92 respondents, 3.7%
- d. *day care services*
 Yes: 448 respondents, 18.0%
 No: 1,896 respondents, 76.1%
 Somewhat: 99 respondents, 4.0%
 Available Now: 24 respondents, 1.0%
- e. *activities/senior citizens*
 Yes: 813 respondents, 32.6%
 No: 1,444 respondents, 57.9%
 Somewhat: 149 respondents, 6.0%
 Available Now: 61 respondents, 2.4%
- f. *job training*
 Yes: 975 respondents, 39.1%
 No: 1,349 respondents, 54.1%
 Somewhat: 122 respondents, 4.9%
 Available Now: 19 respondents, .8%

Q5. When was the last time you saw or heard any type of advertising about your public library or its services?

- a. *last week (includes daily)* 547 respondents, 21.9%
- b. *last month* 341 respondents, 13.7%
- c. *within last year* 309 respondents, 12.4%
- d. *no response/can't remember* 1,113 respondents, 44.6%

These next questions concern your need for information on a daily basis.

Q6. On a day-to-day basis, do you need information on the following topics?

- a. *hobbies/crafts*
 - Yes: 730 respondents, 29.3%
 - No: 1,523 respondents, 61.1%
 - Somewhat: 212 respondents, 8.5%
- b. *local news*
 - Yes: 1,787 respondents, 71.7%
 - No: 601 respondents, 24.1%
 - Somewhat: 76 respondents, 3.0%
- c. *programs of education*
 - Yes: 1,216 respondents, 48.8%
 - No: 1,049 respondents, 42.1%
 - Somewhat: 202 respondents, 8.1%
- d. *best-selling books*
 - Yes: 905 respondents, 36.3%
 - No: 1,355 respondents, 53.5%
 - Somewhat: 224 respondents, 9.0%
- e. *national news*
 - Yes: 1,794 respondents, 72.0%
 - No: 583 respondents, 23.4%
 - Somewhat: 88 respondents, 3.5%
- f. *decisions of local government*
 - Yes: 1,490 respondents, 59.8%
 - No: 811 respondents, 32.5%
 - Somewhat: 163 respondents, 6.5%
- g. *reference or how-to-book*
 - Yes: 1,189 respondents, 47.7%
 - No: 1,001 respondents, 40.2%
 - Somewhat: 274 respondents, 11.0%
- h. *health/medical services*
 - Yes: 1,186 respondents, 47.6%
 - No: 1,053 respondents, 42.2%
 - Somewhat: 223 respondents, 8.9%
- i. *local social services*
 - Yes: 769 respondents, 30.8%
 - No: 1,528 respondents, 61.3%
 - Somewhat: 164 respondents, 6.6%
- j. *videocassettes*
 - Yes: 981 respondents, 39.4%
 - No: 1,276 respondents, 51.2%
 - Somewhat: 204 respondents, 8.2%

Q7. If you wanted more information on the subject of managing money, which of the following would you do? Please give your first and second choices.

- a. *ask a friend or relative*
first choice: 552 respondents, 22.1%
second choice: 317 respondents, 12.7%
- b. *ask a professional*
first choice: 1,014 respondents, 40.7%
second choice: 466 respondents, 18.7%
- c. *buy a book or magazine*
first choice: 227 respondents, 9.1%
second choice: 470 respondents, 18.9%
- d. *attend a lecture*
first choice: 86 respondents, 3.4%
second choice: 189 respondents, 7.6%
- e. *use the public library*
first choice: 274 respondents, 11.0%
second choice: 407 respondents, 16.3%
- f. *take a class*
first choice: 203 respondents, 8.1%
second choice: 339 respondents, 13.6%
- g. *other: Specify*
first choice: 35 respondents, 1.4%
second choice: 14 respondents, 0.6%

Q8. If you wanted more information on the subject of protecting the environment, which of the following would you do? Please give your first and second choices.

- a. *ask a friend or relative*
first choice: 184 respondents, 7.4%
second choice: 167 respondents, 6.7%
- b. *ask a professional*
first choice: 670 respondents, 26.9%
second choice: 363 respondents, 14.6%
- c. *buy a book or magazine*
first choice: 397 respondents, 15.9%
second choice: 466 respondents, 18.7%
- d. *attend a lecture*
first choice: 333 respondents, 13.4%
second choice: 378 respondents, 15.2%
- e. *use the public library*
first choice: 547 respondents, 21.9%
second choice: 553 respondents, 22.2%
- f. *take a class*
first choice: 194 respondents, 7.8%
second choice: 257 respondents, 10.3%
- g. *other: Specify*
first choice: 25 respondents, 1.0%
second choice: 12 respondents, 0.5%

These last questions concern your use of information in the library.

Q9. Does the public library ever provide information to you personally on the following topics?

- a. *local social services*

- Yes: 301 respondents, 12.1%
- No: 2,023 respondents, 81.1%
- Somewhat: 98 respondents, 3.9%
- b. *videocassettes*
 - Yes: 625 respondents, 25.1%
 - No: 1,731 respondents, 69.4%
 - Somewhat: 68 respondents, 2.7%
- c. *reference or how-to books*
 - Yes: 1,201 respondents, 48.2%
 - No: 1,114 respondents, 44.7%
 - Somewhat: 113 respondents, 4.5%
- d. *local news*
 - Yes: 636 respondents, 25.5%
 - No: 1,698 respondents, 68.1%
 - Somewhat: 93 respondents, 3.7%
- e. *programs of education*
 - Yes: 748 respondents, 30.0%
 - No: 1,564 respondents, 62.7%
 - Somewhat: 112 respondents, 4.5%
- f. *best-selling books*
 - Yes: 1,011 respondents, 40.6%
 - No: 1,312 respondents, 52.6%
 - Somewhat: 100 respondents, 4.0%
- g. *hobby/crafts*
 - Yes: 946 respondents, 37.9%
 - No: 1,358 respondents, 54.5%
 - Somewhat: 125 respondents, 5.0%
- h. *health/medical services*
 - Yes: 630 respondents, 25.3%
 - No: 1,647 respondents, 66.1%
 - Somewhat: 143 respondents, 5.7%
- i. *decisions of local government*
 - Yes: 499 respondents, 20.0%
 - No: 1,809 respondents, 72.6%
 - Somewhat: 112 respondents, 4.5%
- j. *national news*
 - Yes: 669 respondents, 26.8%
 - No: 1,662 respondents, 66.7%
 - Somewhat: 96 respondents, 3.9%

Q10. Other than books, magazines, and newspapers, are you familiar with other materials or services that your public library has?

- Yes: 1,110 respondents, 44.5%
- No: 1,332 respondents, 53.4%

REFERENCES

- America's colorful heritage. (1993). *The Numbers News*, 13(February), 1-2.
- Andrews, E. L. (1995). Mr. Smith goes to cyberspace. *The New York Times*, January 6, p. A22.
- At shopping centers, emphasis on shopping. (1995). *Research Alert*, 13(February 3), 1.
- Chute, A. (1993). *Public libraries in the United States: 1991*. Washington, DC: USGPO.
- D'Elia, G. (1993). *The roles of the public library in society—The results of a national survey: Final report*. Evanston, IL: Urban Libraries Council.
- Doremus Porter Novelli. (1987). *Life style profile of the library user*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Electronic media users use more. (1993). *Research Alert*, 11(November 15), 6.
- Estabrook, L. (1991). *National opinion poll on library issues*. Urbana-Champaign: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Library Research Center, University of Illinois.
- Factoids. (1995). *Research Alert*, 13(January 20), 4.
- Garreau, J. (1991). *Edge city: Life on the new frontier*. New York: Doubleday.
- Godbey, G., & Graef, A. (1993). Rapid growth in rushin' Americans. *American Demographics*, 15(4), 26, 28.
- Heil, G.; Parker, T.; & Tate, R. (1995). *Leadership and the customer revolution*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Holt, G. (1992). *Factors in library finance*. Unpublished speech presented at the symposium, "Keeping the books: Public library financial practices." Chicago, IL.
- Knight, D. M., & Nourse, S. (Eds.). (1969). *Libraries at large: Tradition, innovation, and the national interest*. New York: R. R. Bowker Company.
- Lewyn, M., & Carey, J. (1994). Will America log on to the Internet? *Business Week*, 3402, 38.
- Markoff, J. (1995). Battle for influence over insatiable disks. *The New York Times*, January 11, D1, D7.
- Morrison Institute for Public Policy. (1990). *Statewide small business study*. Phoenix, AZ: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University.
- North Dakota Library Association New Directions Task Force. (1990). *North Dakota Library Association Project*. Bismarck, ND: North Dakota Library Association.
- Piirto, R. (1993). Electronic news. *American Demographics*, 15(1), 6.
- Piirto, R. (1994). Why radio thrives. *American Demographics*, 16(5), 40-46.
- Popcorn, F. (1991). *The Popcorn report: Faith Popcorn on the future of your company, your world, your life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Russell, C. (1993). The master trend. *American Demographics*, 15(10), 28-37.
- Vavrek, B. (1990a). *Assessing the information needs of rural Americans*. Clarion, PA: College of Library Science, Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.
- Vavrek, B. (1990b). *Assessing the information needs of rural Pennsylvanians*. Clarion, PA: College of Library Science, Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.
- Vavrek, B. (1992). Asking the clients: Results of a national bookmobile survey. *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 66(9), 35-37, 140.
- Vavrek, B. (1993). *Assessing the role of the rural public library*. Clarion, PA: Department of Library Science, Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.
- Verity, J. (1994). The information revolution: How digital technology is changing the way we work and live. *Business Week*, (Special Issue), 12.
- Video consumers would rather rent movies than buy them. (1993). *Research Alert*, 11(April 16), 7.
- Westin, A. F., & Finger, A. L. (1991). *Using the public library in the computer age: Present patterns, future possibilities*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Willits, F. K., & Willits, H. W. (1989). *Rural behavior and library usage findings from a Pennsylvania survey*. Unpublished speech at the Information and Rural Economic Development Conference, Clarion, PA: College of Library Science, Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.
- Wittig, G. R. (1991). Some characteristics of Mississippi adult library users. *Public Libraries*, 30(1), 25-32.