



To: Toronto Public Library Board – September 24, 2001

From: City Librarian

Subject: **Toronto Public Library: Public Opinion Research –September 2001: Results and Next Steps**

Purpose:

To present preliminary results of the Public Opinion Research completed by Toronto Public Library and to describe the next steps both in incorporating the results into service planning and completing further community consultation.

Funding Implications and Impact Statement:

As an initiative in the *Three Year Workplan for the Strategic Plan* approved by the Library Board in September 2000, funding for public opinion research was incorporated into the Library's 2001 Operating Budget.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Toronto Public Library Board receive for information the *Toronto Public Library: Public Opinion Research – September 2001: Results and Next Steps* report.

Comments:

Within Toronto Public Library's Strategic Plan, a key strategy under the pillar of marketing is to *utilize market research and use analysis tools to develop knowledge of our customers*. To complete this strategy, a baseline opinion survey was identified in the *Three Year Workplan* as an initiative for 2001.

In summary, objectives of the research are to:

- gather demographic and market data about the Library users and non-users to be used for service planning and development, programming and marketing strategies and fundraising initiatives;
- measure awareness of Library services to establish baseline data;
- determine usage and assess satisfaction with Library services.

Methodology and Findings

The firm *Strategic Counsel* completed the telephone survey from May 15 to 28, 2001. The random sample included 1,251 residents of Toronto. Highlights of the findings are listed below under the three research objectives.

Demographic and market data about users and non users

- Toronto Public Library is well used by a very broad section of the population. Seventy-two percent of all those surveyed indicated that they have used Toronto Public Library in the past year; half of those surveyed indicated that they had used the Library in the past month.
- Torontonians born outside of Canada are more likely to be library users than those born in Canada. Twenty-eight percent of those born in Canada have not used a library in the past year compared to only 20 percent of those born outside Canada.
- Torontonians born outside Canada also use the library more frequently. Thirty percent of those born outside Canada use the library at least once per week compared to 14 percent of those born in Canada.
- When compared to the population of Toronto as a whole, those who do not use the public library tend to be seniors, people with less than high school education, and those born in Canada.

Awareness of library services

- Citizens of Toronto are very aware of the traditional services offered by the Library including reference services, study space, circulating collections and children's programs. There is less awareness of Internet services especially among non-users. There is quite high interest in using these services among non-users.
- 86 percent of Torontonians, born outside Canada, are aware that the Library offers collection and services in languages other than English.

Usage and Satisfaction with Toronto Public Library Services

- Torontonians give their Library a tremendous approval rating. Ninety-eight percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement that public libraries are an important resource for the community of which 88 percent strongly agreed with the statement.
- 78 percent of all those surveyed agreed with the statement that they really like using the public library.

- Users of the Library are generally satisfied with the attractiveness and cleanliness of Library buildings.
- 90 percent of those surveyed are satisfied with the helpfulness of Library staff members; 91 percent of those surveyed are satisfied with the knowledge of reference staff.
- The majority of Library visitors come to the branch to borrow books for leisure or personal interest. Users are generally satisfied with the variety of books and materials to be borrowed. There is less satisfaction with the number of recently published books on the shelves.
- Over half of branch visitors have made use of the Library's computers. Students are among the most frequent users of the Library's computers.
- The main reason for using the Library's computers is to search the catalogue for an item; almost half of all computer users place holds on materials. Forty-one percent of computer users access the Library's electronic newspaper and magazine databases.
- 38 percent of those surveyed were satisfied with the Toronto Public website.

Next Steps

During October, Library staff members will conduct a survey of 1,450 users to Research and Reference, District and Neighbourhood Libraries at 23 sample Library branches across the City. This intercept survey will expand upon the findings of the Public Opinion Research. The intercept survey will provide detailed information about how Toronto Public Library branches are used and further information about how satisfied users are with services. Results of both the Public Opinion Research and the intercept survey will be used in future service planning.

Findings from the research have already been incorporated into service plans and marketing and communication strategies. Specific initiatives include:

- increased promotion of the Library's electronic services including free public Internet access;
- staff training programs which focus on building the reference skills of Library staff members in the areas of readers' advisory and electronic services;
- the complete redesign of the Toronto Public Library web site to offer easy access to frequently used services and current information about Library programs and events;
- promoting the availability of new and popular materials through lists in the online catalogue;
- expanding the number of computer courses available to the general public in the Library's eleven User Education Centers and to targeted groups through innovative partnerships such as the [Kids@Computers](#) program.

Conclusion:

Results of the Public Opinion Research overwhelmingly confirm the importance of Toronto Public Library as a community resource. Citizens of Toronto are generally very satisfied with the services offered by the Library. These results will be used to refine future initiatives in the *Three Year Workplan for the Strategic Plan* and to inform the Library's short and long term marketing and communication and fundraising strategies. Results of this community consultation will be a key input into Toronto Public Library's 2002 operating and capital budget submission.

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City Librarian

List of Attachments:

Not applicable.