

Appendix D – Meeting the Community Analysis Requirements of the Ontario Public Library Guidelines

The *Public Libraries Act* requires that library boards in Ontario develop and deliver “a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community’s unique needs.” To develop programs and services that are responsive to community needs, library boards and staff need to be familiar with the demographics of the population served by the library and knowledgeable about community characteristics, local agencies and services, interests and concerns. This involves collecting and synthesizing information in order to develop a comprehensive profile of the community served by the library. In the process, it is important to consider a variety of sources and types of information. For a systematic approach to developing a community profile, consult the ‘Situational Analysis’ section of the publication from the Southern Ontario Library Service called, *Creating the Future You’ve Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning* (2007). A copy was distributed to every library in Ontario.

Sources of community information

Important sources of community information include census data from Statistics Canada and population projections from municipal planning departments and/or local boards of education. The library board’s planning and service decisions should be based on an analysis of current and projected demographic factors such as: age; mother tongue; social-economic status; education; and occupation. Additional information, not always readily available but important for planning library service, includes the literacy rate, computer literacy and availability, and overall information needs of the community. It can be helpful to compare the demographics and characteristics of the library user population to those of the general population. Such comparisons may reveal under-served segments of the population and/or the need for new or modified services.

Surveys

A survey is a common means of assessing the community’s library and information needs, as well as exploring public perceptions and expectations regarding the roles played by the public library in the community. Properly administering a community survey in such a way that the results are reliable and valid is an ambitious undertaking. Because a survey produces data and feedback that cannot be obtained elsewhere, it is a worthwhile undertaking. It is important to recognize, however that a survey demands a significant investment in staff time and expertise. For your convenience, a sample community survey instrument is included later in this appendix. It may also be possible to have the library included in surveys conducted by the Municipality concerning local recreational and cultural services. For further information on surveys, there are two guides on developing and administering surveys, published by the Southern Ontario Library Service:

- *Creating the Future You’ve Imagined: A guide to essential planning (Library Development Guide #3 – 2007)*
- *The Library’s Contribution to Your Community: a resource manual for libraries to document their social and economic contribution to the local community* (2nd edition, 2007)

Other means of consulting with the public

In addition to surveys, there are other worthy means of consulting with the public. Focus groups, interviews, public meetings and open houses may all have roles to play in encouraging the public to think and talk about their library and information needs, their experience of the public library and their understanding of its role in the community. One particularly engaging means of involving a number of people is for the library to host a two hour dialogue with 15 to 25 people who have been identified as community leaders and/or representatives of organizations making a significant contribution to community life. The individual(s) facilitating the gathering will prompt discussion of key community characteristics, concerns, gaps in services and recognized strengths or assets. It may also provide an excellent opportunity to collectively explore roles the library might play in the community.

Obtaining user feedback

Since the people responsible for developing library service have an obligation to anticipate and respond to both the current library users and the larger population served by the library, user feedback is an important aspect of community analysis. There are many methods of consulting with library users, including ongoing, informal mechanisms like a suggestion box, or a universal appeal for feedback on the library's website, as well as more formal undertakings such as user surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups. Consulting current users of the library's programs and services is necessary for assessing how successful the library is at providing appropriate and relevant library service. For a variety of methods for gathering user feedback you can refer to *Creating the Future You've Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning*.

It is important that a community analysis, including public input, be conducted on a regular basis. Library boards and staff share responsibility for gathering the information and analyzing its implications for library service. Making this commitment at least once every four years ensures that every board term includes an opportunity to assess community needs, evaluate current performance and plan how the library's programs and services will meet those needs. As representatives of the community, this is a vital part of the board's responsibility.

Sample Community Survey

1. **How important is it to you that your community provides good quality public library service?**
(PLEASE CHECK ONE ONLY)

Very important Important Somewhat important Not important Don't know

2. **How often do you visit the library?** (PLEASE CHECK ONE ONLY)

at least once a week once every 2-3 weeks once a month once every 2-3 months
at least once every 6 months at least once a year once every few years never

3. **If you HAVE NOT USED the library within the last year, is there a reason?**

lack of time parking inconvenient hours inconvenient use other library
library doesn't have what I need location inconvenient I don't need a library

other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____

What improvements or changes would encourage you to come to the library?

4. **IF YOU HAVE VISITED THE LIBRARY IN THE PAST YEAR, would you say that, in general, the library's services are:**

Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor Don't know

What is the single most important purpose for which you use the library?

To borrow reading material for leisure time use

To borrow a/v materials for leisure time use

To find information and materials related to school

To find information and materials related to job or career

To find information and materials related to personal needs or interests

To attend library programs

To read magazines and newspapers

To get answers to specific questions

To access the Internet

Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____

5. **What days and times of the week are most convenient for you to visit the library?**
(PLEASE CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY)

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
9 - 12 a.m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 - 5 p.m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 - 7 p.m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 - 9 p.m.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. **How many years have you lived in this community?**

all my life more than 25 years 11 - 25 year s 5 - 10 years less than 5 years

7. **What is your age group?**

12 or younger 13 -18 19 - 24 25 - 34 35 - 64 65 - 74 75 and older

8. **What language do you prefer to read in?**

English French Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____

9. **Do you have any additional comments about library services in this community?**

On behalf of _____ Public Library, thank you very much for completing our survey. Your feedback is valuable to us and very much appreciated. Please return your survey to the library by _____.

Sources of information other than surveys

Guideline	Information needed	Possible source
<p>1.3.2 Community analysis - A range of community-related information with possible implications for library service, including demographic data, is gathered and formally analyzed at least once every four years, and the results used in the planning of library service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demographic information about the overall community - age, gender, employment, educational level, languages spoken, income levels, populations projections • library use • materials and services that are most used • open hours that are most popular • materials and services that are not available but would be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada Community Profiles are available on the Internet at http://www.statcan.ca/ These will provide most of the basic demographic data from the latest census • municipal planning projections for population and development • school board registration projections • Annual Survey • annual review of library usage and performance statistics (e.g. circulation by Dewey number) • annual sample count of one week's circulation and library use by hour (<i>This will indicate popular times among current library users only. Similar information about non-users, some of whom may not use the library because the hours are not convenient, can be obtained in a community survey.</i>) • public suggestion box • records of unfilled information requests • records of ILLO requests
<p>1.3.3 Consultation of users - Library users are consulted regularly concerning library service (e.g. by means of surveys, focus groups, formal and informal interviews, open houses, suggestion box, website, etc.). An analysis of public comments and suggestions is carried out at least once a year and the results used in the planning of library service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • materials and services that are most used • materials and services that are not available but would be used • evaluation of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual review of library usage and performance statistics (e.g. circulation by Dewey number) • public suggestion box • records of unfilled information requests • records of ILLO requests
<p>3.1.6 Staffing - a) The library has in place a process for regularly assessing the number of staff required to meet community needs (as determined, for example, by such circumstances as level of activity, number of users, and total hours open).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of circulations per hour open • number of circulations per staff member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Survey • Annual Survey

<p>Where the existing number of staff has been determined to be inadequate, the library has a plan in place to improve the situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • population projections • membership numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipal planning projections for population and development • library statistics
<p>3.2.1 Content and size of collection - The library has a process in place for regularly assessing the content and size of the collection required to meet community needs. (Materials may be owned by the individual library or shared with a group of libraries in a materials pool.) Where the existing content and/or size of the collection has been determined to be inadequate, the library has a plan in place to improve the situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demographic information about the entire community - age, gender, employment, educational level, languages spoken, income levels, populations projections • materials and services that are most used • materials and services that are not available but would be used • adequacy of collection size and content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada Community Profiles, available on the Internet at http://www.statcan.ca/, will provide most of the basic demographic data from the latest census • municipal planning projections for population and development • school board registration projections • annual review of circulation by Dewey number • public suggestion box • records of unfilled information requests • records of ILLO requests <i>(These three pieces above will provide less useful information than could be gained from a survey.)</i> • volumes per capita compared to means and medians in Ontario Public Library Statistics • circulation per capita compared to volumes per capita • turnover rate • public suggestions for purchase
<p>3.2.6 Formats and languages - The library offers materials in a suitable variety of formats and languages reflecting the community's needs (e.g. books, periodicals, audio recordings, video recordings, materials for the disabled, CD-ROM products, on-line products, archival and local history materials, materials in languages reflecting local linguistic groups).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • languages spoken by residents • literacy levels / educational levels • availability of materials in other languages and formats from other local sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada Community Profiles, available on the Internet at http://www.statcan.ca/, will provide most of the basic demographic data from the latest census • list of organizations providing materials (e.g. cultural groups, heritage language classes, video rental outlets, school libraries etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of other languages and formats in the library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circulation statistics of materials in other languages and formats, by language and by format
<p>3.4.1 Space - The library has undertaken a planning process which has examined the library's space requirements in light of local needs. Where the existing space has been determined to be inadequate, the library has a plan in place to improve the situation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • population projections • in library use patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipal planning projections for population and development • school board registration projections • annual sample count of use of reference materials, study spaces, reading areas
<p>4.7.1 Programming/Community need - The library has determined what community needs exist for what types of programs and for which age levels. (For example, programming is an integral part of most children's services and is used to promote lifelong use of libraries, to stimulate a love of literature and reading, and to impart important information and skills.). Where there is a demonstrated need, the library offers programs to the community as appropriate, either alone or in conjunction with other local organizations (e.g. story hour for pre-schoolers; reading clubs; lectures; demonstrations; author readings).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities desired but not available in the community • population age ranges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • list of local organizations and schools offering activities and identification of gaps <i>(These will provide less useful information than could be gained from a survey.)</i> • records of unfilled information requests • records of ILLO requests • public suggestions • Statistics Canada Population and Dwelling Characteristics - Census Divisions and Subdivisions; Ontario Part 1
<p>4.8.1 Community information/Community need - The library has determined what community needs exist for providing general information about the community. Where there is a demonstrated need, the library provides a community information service as appropriate, either alone or in conjunction with other local organizations and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community information which is needed but not readily available to the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • list of local information sources and identification of gaps • records of unfilled information requests
<p>4.9.1 Local history/Community need - The library has determined what community needs exist for a local history resource. Where there is a demonstrated need, the library provides a local history service as appropriate, either on its own or in conjunction with other local organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interest in local history not being met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • other sources of local history information (e.g. National Archives for local newspapers, LACAC for architectural information, neighbouring local history collections) • records of unfilled information requests