

In Context

Much has changed in the environment since OCLC published *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources* in 2005. There have been leaps in consumer technology and services, and America has seen one of the worst recessions in its history.

Some of today's most popular social Internet sites were either just starting up (Facebook) or did not even exist (Twitter) in 2005. Smartphones had just barely broken into the marketplace, and the popular Kindle e-book reader was still two years away. Technology advances touched libraries as well with more than 80% of U.S. public libraries now offering wireless access to the Internet.

As Americans have embraced advancements in technology over the past five years, they have also been hit by The Great Recession, a U.S. economy plagued by the highest unemployment rates in decades and significant losses in wealth, real estate and retirement savings. Americans even beyond the almost 10% who are unemployed have been negatively impacted by the poor economy. They are making lifestyle adjustments such as reduced spending and saving, and they are using libraries more—a lot more!

Not only are Americans using the library and its many services more, they also see increased value of the library for themselves and for their communities. They agree—overwhelmingly—that librarians are valuable. And they believe—overwhelmingly—that libraries equal books.

We put what we learned into context.

