

THE LIBRARY... A VALUED COMMUNITY ASSET

Americans believe the library has become more valuable to their communities due to the recession. Not only have Americans increased their use of the library, but they have an increased belief that the library is an important community asset. A third of all Americans (31%)—or 60 million Americans age 14 and over—see an increase in the value of the library for their communities. And, for Americans who have had a negative job impact, the increased value of the library is an even greater percentage (40%)—or equal to over 14 million economically impacted Americans.

Our study shows that the library continues to be used, and perceived, as an important source of books and other materials, both for information consumers and their communities. And the 2010 report also highlights the belief that the library is an increasingly important community asset as a place that provides the ability to save money in tough economic times, as a place to learn and read, and as a place to support literacy in America.

Americans see increased value of the library

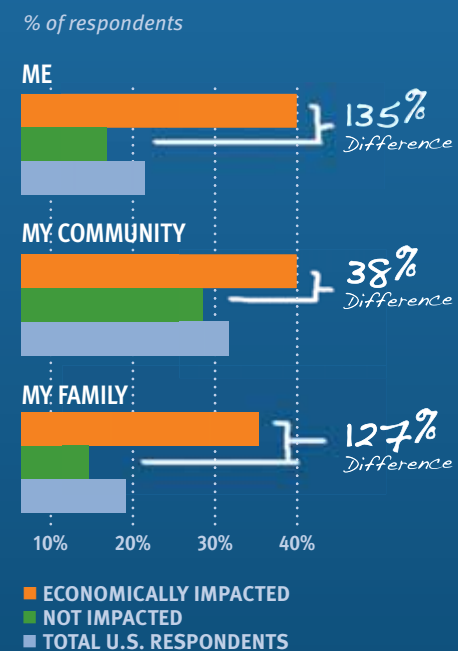
Americans believe the library is a socially valued institution. Our survey asked respondents to indicate how the value of the library has changed for them, their families or their communities during the recent recession. We also asked the information consumers to share what they believe is the most important role of the library for themselves personally and for their communities.

Millions of Americans, across all age groups, indicated that the value of the library has increased during the recent recession. Information consumers believe the value has increased even more for their communities (31%) than for themselves (21%) or families (19%). Each age group has double-digit percentages that see an increased value of the libraries for themselves as well as an increased value for their families and their communities. College

“The library continues to allow access to training and education to all who seek it regardless of ability to pay. The public library system saves lives, careers and futures.”

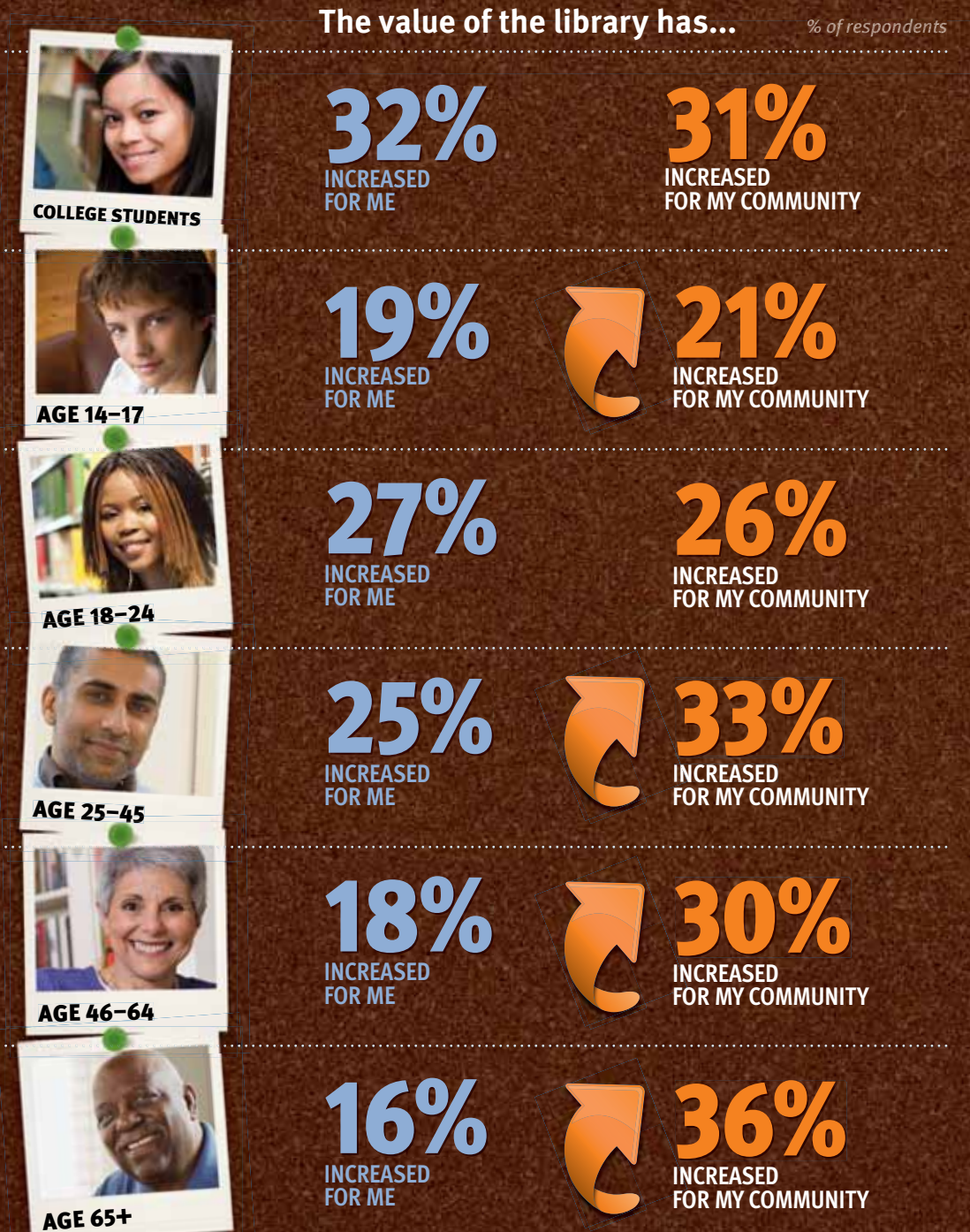
61-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED

Value of the library has increased for...



Libraries...valuable to the community

Americans' perceived value of the library has increased for themselves personally—and even more so for their community.



students agree. A third of all college students see an increase in the value of the library for themselves, as well as for their communities, during the recent recession.

The age groups that see the largest personal increase in value are Americans between ages 18 and 45. A quarter of these Americans believe the library is more valuable today than it was before the recession. For college students, the personal value was even greater, at 32%.

Our study found that older Americans were more likely to indicate an increased value of the library for the community. While 21% of teens (ages 14–17) indicated that the value of the library had increased for their community, more than a third (36%) of seniors (age 65 and older) see an increase in value to their community.

Economically impacted Americans are most likely to see increased library value, with 40% indicating that the value has increased both for them personally and for their communities, and 34% indicating increased value for their families. When compared to those not impacted, economically impacted Americans are twice as likely to recognize increased value for themselves and their families, and 38% more likely for their communities.

Americans who have not experienced a negative job impact due to the recession are more likely to indicate an increased library value for their communities rather than for themselves. Almost a third (29%) of Americans not impacted cite a belief that library value has increased for their community as a result of the current economic environment, whereas 17% of them indicate increased library value on a personal level.

Not all Americans saw an increase in personal value of the library. Roughly 20% of Americans reported a decrease in personal value. The reasons included: finding information online is more convenient, libraries have had to reduce their hours or close and are not available when needed, and spending money on gas to get to the library is a challenge. Fewer economically impacted Americans reported a decline in personal value of the library, just 13%.

Library value has increased...

“ I can read lots of books for free instead of spending \$10 for two hours of entertainment”

19-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED COLLEGE STUDENT

“ They have gone out of their way to be sure everyone has access to what they need.”

74-YEAR-OLD

“ It has become a space I can use instead of going to a place where I would have to pay for internet or book services.”

23-YEAR-OLD ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED

Library value has decreased...

“ I read a lot but the library is not receiving funds to purchase new books that I would like to read.”

49-YEAR-OLD

“ a library is starting to be in the past due to new technology allowing us to do the same things without actually going to a library”

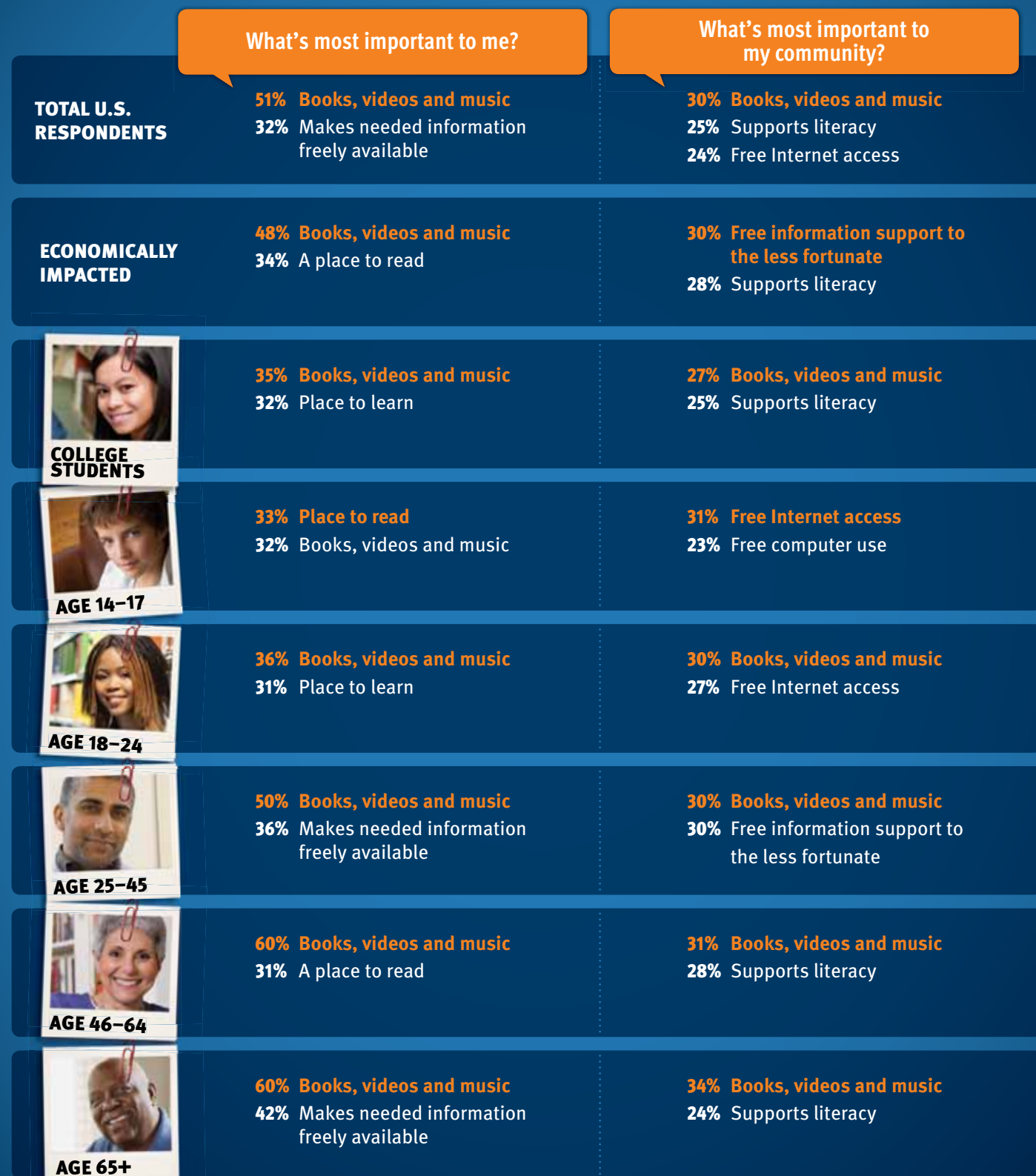
16-YEAR-OLD

“ The computer has decreased my need to reference things at the library. I also belong to 2 book swaps online.”

71-YEAR-OLD

Important library roles

Books, videos, music...most important to Americans and their communities



Overwhelmingly, Americans view the library's role as a place to get **books, videos and music**.

Books, videos and music are as important to them **personally** as this role is to their **communities**.

The most important role of the library: a place for books, videos and music

Overwhelmingly, Americans view the library's role as a place to get books, videos and music, a role that is as important to them personally as to their community. A place to learn, read and to make information freely available are library roles Americans feel are more important to them personally than for their community. Meanwhile, free Internet and computer access, supporting literacy and providing information support to the less fortunate are library roles more important to their communities.

There is consistency across most age groups that a place to get books, videos and music is the most important role the library plays personally. Teens are the exception. The most important role the library plays for those ages 14-17 personally is as a place to read.

Most Americans feel the most important role the library plays for the community is a place for books, videos and music. Teens view the most important library role for the community differently. Teens feel free Internet access is the top library role for the community.

For those Americans who have been economically impacted, the most important role the library plays for them personally is the same as it is for almost all Americans—as a place to get books, videos and music. When it comes to the community, though, the economically impacted see the library's most important role as a provider of free information support to the less fortunate.

College students feel the most important library role for them personally and for their community is a place for books, videos and music. A place to learn is the second most important role to college students personally, while supporting literacy is the second most important role for their community.