OCLC conducted a member survey to understand librarians’ top priorities, current key initiatives, thoughts on service and top methods for keeping current on happenings in the library field.

Most public library staff:
- Anticipate that the top reason patrons are using their library will change in five years
- Are focusing on e-books as their top initiative
- Rely mostly on listservs and e-mail to stay current—while just a few use social media.

Opinions are split on the make-up of service points in the future.
For public library directors, their top priority is demonstrating value to funders.

If you would like to read similar reports about U.S. academic and community college libraries, see the reports at www.oclc.org/reports.

**Survey demographics**

- **Respondents by library type**
  - Public 31% (n=1,298)
  - Academic 48%
  - Other 17%
  - Community college 4%
  - Total respondents (n=4,168)

- **Length of service in libraries**
  - More than 20 years 52%
  - 6 to 20 years 41%
  - 5 years or less 7%
  - (n=1,020 of 1,298)

- **Role**
  - Director 39%
  - Manager 38%
  - Librarian 22%
  - Other 1%
  - (n=1,016 of 1,298)

**Patron demand expected to change:** The majority of public library staff surveyed indicate that borrowing books and materials is still the top reason patrons use the public library today, followed by technology. Most expect those reasons to change over the next five years.

- **The primary reason patrons use the library in five years will...**
  - Change significantly 12%
  - Change modestly 50%
  - Remain the same 33%
  - Don’t know 4%

- **62% Borrow materials**
- **33% Use technology**

- **62%** Anticipate a change in the top reason patrons use the library.
**More online traffic and more nontraditional service points**

Public library staff expect use of the library—both physical and online—to grow in the next two years. Just 8% see a decline in in-person traffic to their library. Ideally, some would like to serve their communities with new and additional service points.

**Use of the library will increase:** Public library staff expect the number of unique online and in-person visitors to increase in the next two years. Managers are most likely to anticipate an increase in use of the online library.

**85% expect use of the online library will increase**

- **Will increase:**
  - Managers: 91%
  - Directors: 84%
  - Librarians: 81%
- **Don't know:** 5%
- **Will decline:** 1%
- **Will remain the same:** 9%

**55% expect use of the physical library will increase**

- **Will increase:**
  - Directors: 57%
  - Librarians: 57%
  - Managers: 55%
- **Don't know:** 4%
- **Will decline:** 8%
- **Will remain the same:** 33%

**Staff split on service points:** Nearly half of public library staff would ideally like the make-up of their service points to be different in five years while the other half want it to stay the same. Opinions on the likelihood and timing of a national (or large-scale) digital library are still forming.

**55% of public library staff would ideally like the same number of branches in five years.**

**45% would like a change in service points.**

**FEWER TRADITIONAL BRANCHES, MORE SERVICE POINTS**

- 23%

**MORE BRANCHES**

- 18%

**FEWER BRANCHES**

- 4%

**38%** think there will be a national digital library used by their patrons in the next 5 years

- 31% think it will happen in more than 5 years.
- 27% don’t know when it will happen.
- 4% think it will never happen.

“[My library’s] strategic plan...[includes] closure or repurposing of five small, inadequate and under-utilized libraries in favor of one, much larger branch library able to offer significant meeting and study space...”

PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR

“Remote service points that are not library buildings.”

PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR
E-content, Internet and value: top priorities and initiatives

Public libraries are focused on delivering Internet access, the move to e-content and demonstrating value to funders. Top 2012 initiatives emphasize e-books.

Top priorities by public library respondents

**TOP 3 PRIORITIES**

- Ensuring adequate Internet access: 36%
- Demonstrating library value to funders: 34%
- Licensed e-collections/e-books: 32%

**OTHER PRIORITIES**

- Access to new technology: 29%
- Forming community partnerships: 28%
- Visibility of library’s collection: 26%
- Facilities issues: 22%
- Addressing literacy: 18%
- Community technology training: 13%
- Sharing resources within state: 11%

Top priorities by job role

**DIRECTORS**

- Demonstrating library value to funders: 35%
- Ensuring adequate Internet access: 32%
- Forming community partnerships: 30%

**MANAGERS**

- Demonstrating library value to funders: 36%
- Ensuring adequate Internet access: 34%
- Licensed e-collections/e-books: 34%

**LIBRARIANS**

- Ensuring adequate Internet access: 45%
- Access to new technology: 35%
- Licensed e-collections/e-books: 32%

E-books dominate initiatives today: E-books are the most popular new initiative this year.

- **E-books and other e-resources**
  - E-books: 27%
  - E-resources: 10%

  **E-books**
  - Buildings/facilities issues: 9%
  - Outreach/instruction: 8%
  - Budget/funding: 7%
  - Technology: 7%
  - ILS: 6%
  - Other new products: 6%
  - Mobile access: 5%
  - Digital initiatives: 5%
  - Resource sharing: 3%
  - Discovery tools: 2%

  **E-resources**
  - Buildings/facilities issues: 9%
  - Outreach/instruction: 8%
  - Budget/funding: 7%
  - Technology: 7%
  - ILS: 6%
  - Other new products: 6%
  - Mobile access: 5%
  - Digital initiatives: 5%
  - Resource sharing: 3%
  - Discovery tools: 2%

  “Balancing e-books with building new libraries”
  PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR

  “E-books, e-books, e-books, and anything else we can think of for mobile devices”
  PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR
Listservs still hot

Public library staff rely primarily on listservs/e-mail lists and journals for library information.

**Listservs are top information sources:** Listservs/e-mail lists top the list of sources for staying informed about the library industry among all public library staff. In contrast, few follow Twitter to stay informed. Library staff with 5 years or less tenure are generally more likely to use social media and least likely to use journals and e-mail.

### Listservs/e-mail lists

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public library respondents</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Librarians</th>
<th>5 years or less</th>
<th>6 to 20 years</th>
<th>More than 20 years</th>
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<tr>
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<td>62%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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### Library industry journals

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### Blogs

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### Facebook

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<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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### Twitter

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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### Percentage who follow Twitter

- Directors: 11%
- Managers: 17%
- Librarians: 19%

### Most-followed Twitter handles

- ALA News (@alanews)
- Library Journal (@LibraryJournal)
- American Libraries (@amlibraries)

### Twitter yet to take off

- 85% do not use Twitter as a way to keep up with library trends

### Half of public library staff read blogs

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
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<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>53%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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### Top 6 blogs

- Annoyed Librarian (Library Journal)
- Librarian in Black (Sarah Houghton-Jan)
- BlogJunction (WebJunction)
- Library Technology Guides (Marshall Breeding)
- Stephen’s Lighthouse (Stephen Abram)
- Free Range Librarian (Karen Schneider)

### Top journals read

- Library Journal 76%
- American Libraries 52%
- Public Libraries 45%

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“<I don’t do blogs or Twitter.”

**PUBLIC LIBRARY MANAGER**

“I look at these [blogs] if they are referenced on a listserv, or e-mail, or in conversation.”

**PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

“E-mail communication is vital.”

**PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

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OCLC conducted primary research in 2011 by inviting library staff via personal e-mail to participate in a survey. This report details findings from the 1,298 U.S. public library staff who participated.

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