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# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

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*Better Decisions through Information and Insight from Community Surveys*

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## Your Customer Is Changing!

Increasingly, library funding from state, regional, and federal agencies is being cut. As a result, libraries are turning to their local communities to make up the difference in funding. This will open up a whole new way of thinking about customer service. In the past, library leaders have indicated they were hesitant to survey community members since that would raise expectations that the library might change the services it provides. Now a library has to understand the expectations of its community so that it can better meet them. The libraries that understand and meet the needs of the community will be positioned to find additional resources there. Library leaders who believe that assessing the needs of community members requires too much energy or money will find themselves left behind.

**Carol Pelz, Director  
Grandview Heights Public Library**

“Like no other management tool, you can validate performance and benchmark against other libraries in an 'apples to apples' way. To have the flexibility to add your own questions for specific budgetary and service planning was invaluable to us—especially the ease of pulling data by gender and age for individual questions. The information yield exceeded our expectations.”

## **80% to 95% of library users are clearly satisfied with the services of their local library. But...**

As one library director put it, we stopped surveying our community because “people love us.” **That’s a big mistake.**

**Our research shows that libraries  
live or die on that 15% difference  
in patron satisfaction.**

Whether 80% or 95% of your users are clearly satisfied may make a decisive difference in

- Your ability to pass a local tax initiative
- Your ability to reach non-users
- Your ability to increase attendance at library programs.
- Your ability to impact your community.
- The quality of the “community chatter” regarding your library.

For every 10,000 patrons, a 1% drop in satisfaction has 2,000 impacts on people in your community.

**Do you know the level of library satisfaction in your community?  
That’s just one piece of information you get from the Community Assessment Tool.**

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# The Community Assessment Tool is a 63-question, single-sheet survey with a 30% - 50% return rate. But look at the information it provides you:

## OVERALL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX

Gives you critical information regarding the community's evaluation of the overall performance of your library.

## DRIVERS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND INCREASED USAGE

Indicates what the "levers" are in your library services where small changes can have large effects on satisfaction and usage.

## GROWTH IN USAGE RATE

Provides an important but hard to get piece of information for marketing your library to the community at a time when circ rates do not tell the whole story.

## NUMBER OF NON-USERS, INFREQUENT USERS, AND FREQUENT USERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Lets you know how you are doing reaching your market and what your potential is for expansion.

## SOCIAL VALUE INDEX

Guides you in understanding how important the library is as a social gathering space and not merely an information gathering place.

## EIGHT CRITICAL PERFORMANCE INDICES

Staff index

Facilities index

Operations index

Program index

Technology index

Collection index

Speed index

Malfunction recovery index

## GOALS FOR EXPANDING YOUR MARKET BROKEN OUT BY

Usage – Guides you in reaching non users as well as shaping the usage of current users.

Age – Assists you in assessing the needs of all ages

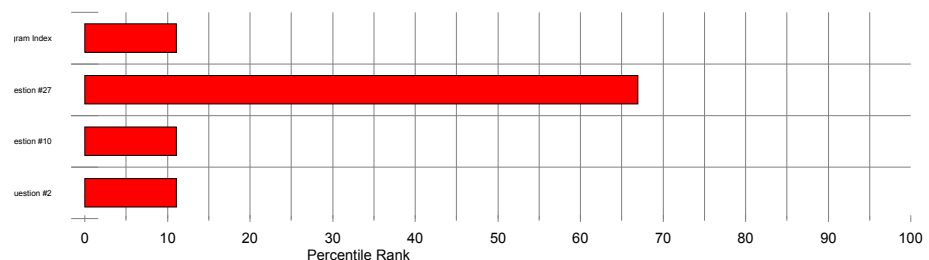
## DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics include age, education, number of children, distance from library, years in community, department used.

Plus a **COMPARATIVE PROFILE** on all indices and goals to benchmark your performance against others in your industry.

### Malfunction Recovery Index

Percentile ranks are provided to indicate how a library is doing in comparison with other libraries on each of 10 indices. This is merely a sample for a single index.



**MAKE BETTER DECISIONS  
IN LESS TIME  
WITH MORE CONFIDENCE.**

**The Community Assessment Tool will  
guide you in deciding:**

**Where to invest resources**

- Print Collection
- AV Collection
- Facilities
- Programs
- Staff development

**How to keep current users/acquire new ones**

- Nexters
- GenX
- Baby Boomers
- Traditionalists

**What kinds of training would be useful**

- Customer service
- Managing complaints
- Computers/technology
- Facilities management
- Marketing and public relations
- Special programming

**How to get a local tax initiative passed**

- Assessment of voter attitudes toward a tax issue
- Analysis of users versus non-users
- Issues important for solidifying the “yes” vote
- Issues important for shifting the “swing” vote
- Guidance for marketing the campaign

**What really matters to people**

- Drivers of customer satisfaction
- Drivers of increased customer usage
- Possibilities for market expansion
- Social experiences
- Safety concerns

We get  
out of the  
**FOG**  
of decision-making  
when we  
use more **Facts**  
fewer **Opinions**  
and stop **Guessing**



Betty Clarkson  
Director  
**Samuel Bossard Memorial Library**

Using a professionally designed and evaluated survey, we were able to better determine the needs and interests of the county. Particularly interesting to us are the possibilities for growth as described by the "non-users" and future library services to the younger age groups. The Board has approved the repetition of this survey every two years to establish a benchmark for growth and progress. With funding so tight, it is vitally important that we both provide the services desired by our communities now -- and plan for the services needed by the communities in the future.

Karen Sonderman  
Director  
**North Canton Public Library**

The Community Assessment Tool gave the residents of the North Canton Public Library service area an opportunity to have input into the creation of a strategic plan for the library that, although written by the Library Board of Trustees, ultimately belongs to the entire community.

Donna Perdsock  
Director  
**Euclid Public Library**

It was time to check in with the community to ask them how we're doing, and they told us. The insight we gained from using the Community Assessment Tool will help us as we craft our strategic plan. In the process Holy Cow! Consulting was a pleasure to work with.

Shannon Lang  
Director  
**London Public Library**

The use of the Community Assessment Tool designed by Holy Cow was the perfect beginning to our strategic planning process. It provided an avenue for customers to participate in the process and for the planning team to clearly identify how we are viewed by our community. Based on our strengths and weaknesses, we knew where to focus our attention.

## How the *Community Assessment Tool* Process Works

1. A decision is made to proceed and a contract is signed. No up front payment is required from the library.
2. Supplemental questions are customized for the individual library and developed in consultation with Holy Cow! Consulting.
3. Holy Cow! Consulting obtains voter records in electronic form from the local Board of Elections. From these a random sample is generated to create a mailing list.
4. Holy Cow! Consulting provides the library with surveys, mailing envelopes, and return envelopes in quantity along with two sets of mailing labels and a full set of instructions on how to insure a good return rate.
5. The library mails out and then receives all surveys which are boxed and returned to Holy Cow! Consulting for processing.
6. Data from the surveys is entered twice and checked to insure accuracy.
7. A report and analysis are provided in a notebook format to the library.
8. Holy Cow! Consulting is available by phone to answer all questions regarding interpretation and to run additional cross-tabulations as requested at no additional charge.

*For more information contact*

**Holy Cow! Consulting**  
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