

Online Survey Summary Report for Greene County Public Library

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S T R A T E G I S T S

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The Greene County Public Library (GCPL) contracted with Burges & Burges Strategists to conduct an online survey to assess patrons' satisfaction with GCPL and its current services as well as to gather input about patrons' expectations for the library in the future. The survey tool, developed cooperatively by GCPL and Burges & Burges Strategists, was designed to identify library patrons' opinions and perceptions about library facilities, staff, communication efforts, and a variety of services as well as patrons' thoughts about their future library use in order to assist GCPL in planning in ways that best meet the community's needs in the years to come.

The GCPL online survey was conducted between the weeks of August 15th and August 27th. It was made available to patrons through a hyperlink posted on the GCPL website homepage, in emails to patrons, on the library's public computers, through GCPL's online social networking tools, and with paper surveys available to patrons in the library branches. In total, 2,804 surveys were completed. The survey was designed with forced-choice responses along with one open-ended question to allow participants to expand on their thoughts. It is important to note the online survey results should not be interpreted as a specific representation of the county's population or of GCPL patrons. However, this online survey data can provide some useful insights when considered by GCPL in combination with other research and information. This report is a summary of the survey results and the major themes found in the response data.

Online Survey Findings

Respondent Demographics

Nearly three-fourths (73.24%) of the respondents who participated in the GCPL online survey were female. More than sixty percent (62.87%) of respondents were over 45 years of age, with a fourth (24.84%) of all respondents representing the 56-65 age demographic. Approximately 47% (46.96%) of the respondents live in a household of three or more people, and 40.06% live in a two-person household. However, more than sixty percent (61.89%), of the respondents indicated they do not have minor children living in their household.

The respondents were generally well educated and connected to the library. More than two-thirds (67.79%) of the respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree, and 29.78% hold a master's degree. Approximately seventy percent (69.84%) of the respondents have two or more GCPL cardholders in their household; with about another third (32.23%) indicating they have a single GCPL cardholder in their household. A small percentage of the survey respondents (less than 0.5%) reported no GCPL cardholders in their households. More than forty percent (42.42%) of the respondents use the Greene County Public Library at least once a week, and another thirty percent (29.78%) use the library a couple



times a month. More than seventy percent (72.63%) travel less than five miles to visit a GCPL facility, with 39.07% naming the Beavercreek location as their most-frequently visited library branch. The Xenia and Fairborn locations had the second and third highest number of frequent users, respectively.

Survey Communication and Access

Nearly ninety percent (89.15%) of the respondents accessed or were made aware of the online survey through an email from GCPL, while about 8% indicated seeing the link on GCPL's website. About 4.5% were made aware of the survey by a sign or staff member at a library branch, and 3.88% found the link on a public computer at a GCPL location. Less than 2% became aware of the survey through GCPL's Facebook or Twitter tools, and a slightly lower percentage completed paper surveys. Survey respondents were permitted to choose multiple answers to reflect all the ways they were made aware of the survey – and not just the one used to complete the survey – therefore percentages will total more than 100%.

General Findings

High, overall satisfaction with GCPL was reflected in the survey responses. A total of more than 95% of the respondents agreed (36.09%) or strongly agreed (58.99%) they were generally satisfied with the resources, facilities, programs, and services they receive at their most-frequently visited library.

When asked specifically about facilities and equipment, patrons' assessments also were favorable. A total of more than ninety-six percent agreed (25.75%) or strongly agreed (70.80%) library facilities are welcoming, clean, and comfortable. Nearly the same amount (95.84%) expressed satisfaction with equipment at the library (such as copiers, computers, and printers), with 44.08% agreeing and 51.04% strongly agreeing that these items are almost always working when they need them. In addition, more than eighty percent (82.28%) agreed or strongly agreed the library is consistently able to provide meeting room space to community groups that request it. While the open-ended responses included numerous positive comments about facilities as well, more than a few patrons specifically mentioned the entrance doors at the Beavercreek location were heavy or difficult to open. Also, the need for more or better access to parking – particularly for the physically handicapped – is needed.

Respondents also expressed high satisfaction with GCPL staff. Ninety-five percent of the respondents agreed (30.82%) or strongly agreed (64.24%) that staff members are generally available to provide individual help or instruction when needed. A like amount (95.47%) agreed or strongly agreed they receive prompt, courteous, and helpful service from library staff, and those who strongly agreed represented close to three-fourths of all survey respondents (73.24%). Plentiful comments in the open-ended responses praising GCPL staff for good customer service supported the high ratings. Examples include:



“The staff everywhere are outstanding in their professionalism and helpful attitudes.”

“I would like to thank the staff at the Yellow Springs Library for their dedication to friendly, efficient customer service. I could not ask for friendlier more helpful assistance. They have fostered a love of libraries in my children, and that is invaluable to me.”

“I have been very pleased with the help from the personnel at the Bellbrook Library. They are so willing to go the extra mile.”

Although patron satisfaction with GCPL staff overall was evident, there were more than a dozen comments regarding staff at the Beavercreek location being perceived as “rude” or “unfriendly” to patrons. Considering the largest percentage of respondents visit the Beavercreek location most often and the high overall ratings and comments for staff, GCPL should examine the open-ended verbatim responses to determine if they can provide any additional insights and follow-up as necessary.

Library programming also received high marks. A total of nearly eighty percent of the respondents agreed (42.92%) or strongly agreed (37.02%) the library regularly provides high quality and popular programs for a variety of ages and interests in their community. An additional 15.69% somewhat agreed with that statement. More than three-fourths (77.71%) feel informed about the services, materials, and programs available at the library, and an additional 15.47% of the respondents somewhat agreed with that statement.

Almost all (92.44%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed the library offers materials in a variety of formats (e.g. print, audio-visual, digital) to meet patrons’ various needs and preferences, and 89.35% agreed or strongly agreed the library collection reflects the variety of individuals and groups in their community. In addition, 80.03% indicated they regularly find the resource or material they are looking for in the library collection, and another 16.25% somewhat agreed this is the case.

More than half of the respondents agreed (38.95%) or strongly agreed (18.20%) the library has a regular and significant presence at community events, and another 29.40% of the participants somewhat agreed with that statement.

Website and Online Services

Survey respondents were asked to assess their satisfaction with GCPL’s website and assorted online offerings. Notably, nearly 85% of the respondents agreed (46.35%) or strongly agreed (38.52%) the library’s website is easy to navigate and contains important and useful information and resources. Another 11.33% agreed somewhat and less than 4% disagreed with this statement. More than ninety percent find the “My Account” feature on the library’s website to be helpful and convenient, with a majority (56.64%) strongly agreeing. More than 80% of the participants agreed (40.70%) or strongly agreed (42.68%) the library’s online catalog is easy to search and find resources, and another 12.37%



somewhat agreed. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed (45.07%) or strongly agreed (45.11%) the library's online databases are valuable resources, while 80% agreed (55.22%) or strongly agreed (25.11%) the website's "Ask a Librarian" option is helpful and convenient.

In addition, while not limited to online services, nearly seventy percent of the participants agreed (47.07%) or strongly agreed (20.94%) the library is usually on the cutting edge with the latest technology, and another 24.62% somewhat agreed with that statement.

Importance of Materials, Programs, and other Offerings

Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of various materials, programs, and other offerings to successful library service. Topping the list – with nearly 99% of the participants – was a friendly, helpful staff. In fact, 85.29% indicated it as being very important. Print materials (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers) were a close second with close to 95% considering it important (16.09%) or very important (78.64%). Quiet reading or study areas, audio-visual materials (e.g. videos, music, audio books), reference databases, programs for children and teens, public computers, and internet access were rated important or very important by approximately 89-84% of respondents. Of these, the one with the highest percentage of respondents indicating it as very important was children and teen programs with 66.07%.

While a majority of survey respondents indicated they do not have children living in their households, the responses in the open-ended questions also demonstrated that patrons value children's programs and resources and that grandparents in particular appreciate it for their grandchildren:

"While I am a senior citizen, I take care of my grandchildren while their parents work and use the children's library frequently. I use both books and programs and have found them very engaging for the children."

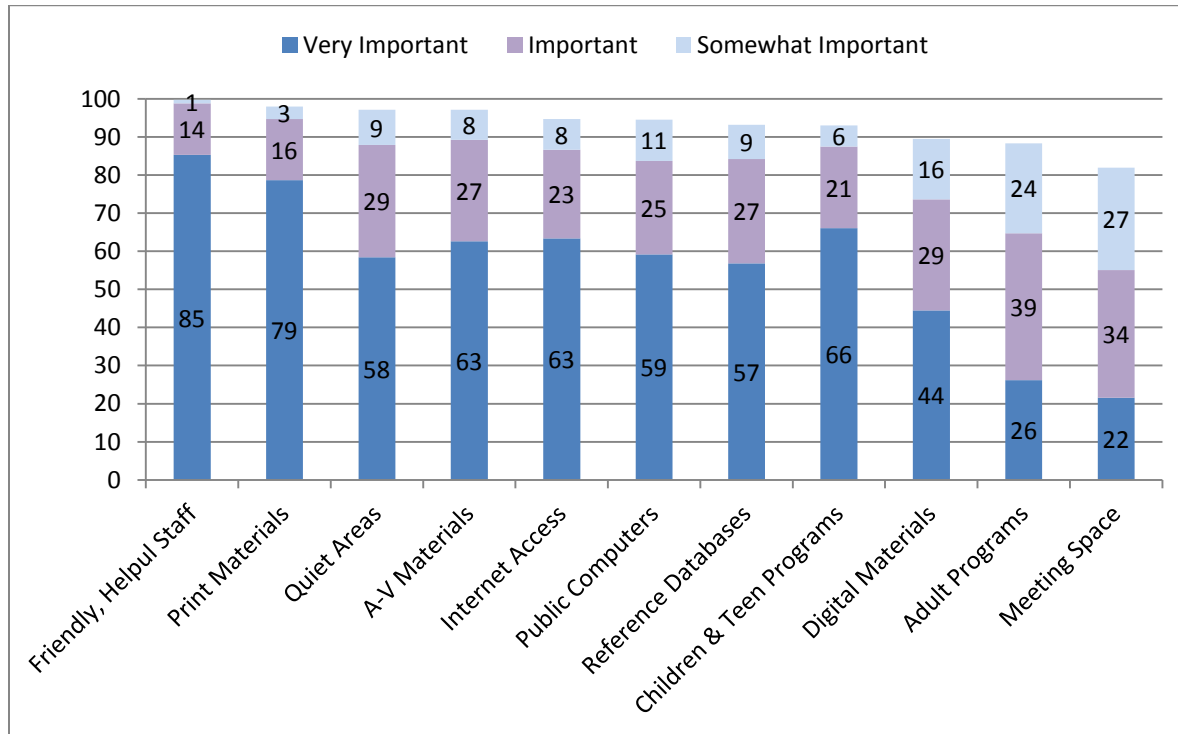
"I would like to see more programs available for small children. I think it is very important they go to the library, have story time, socialize with other children there, so when they become teenagers/adults, they will know what is available and the amount of knowledge/resources /enjoyment the library has to offer them. I am a grandmother now, and I will continue to encourage my grandchildren to visit the library as I did with my children."

While by comparison, digital materials (e.g. ebooks and downloadable audio books) were not rated as important as those items, close to three-fourths of the respondents (73.68%) indicated it was important or very important. In addition, programs for adults and meeting spaces were important or very important to a majority of respondents, but still far fewer than all other materials, programs, and offerings listed in the survey.



The chart below shows a summary of responses for each of the items rated (percentages shown are rounded to the nearest whole number). Complete results are attached in the report appendix.

Q 13. For each of the following please tell us how important you feel it is to the library successfully serving you and the patrons in your community.



Future Materials, Programs, and other Offerings

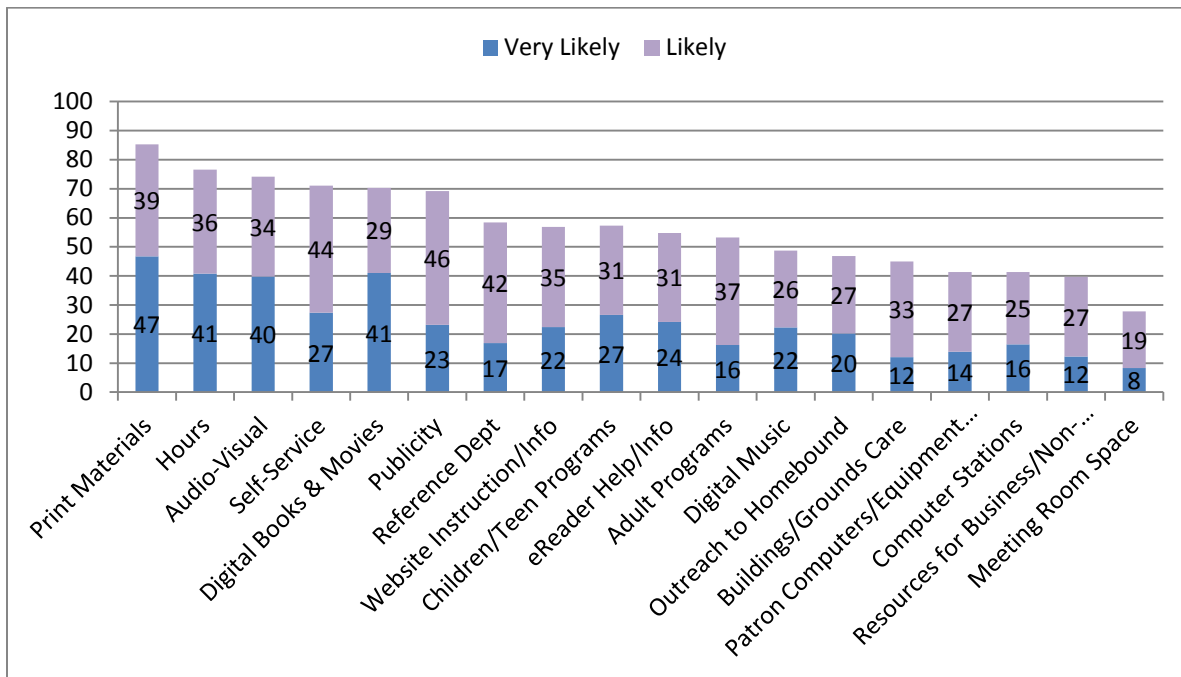
Respondents were asked to rate how likely certain improved or expanded offerings were to increase their usage and/or improve their experience of the library in the future. Print materials (85.28%) again topped the list. About three-fourth of the respondents said increasing/expanding library hours (76.57%) and increasing audio-visual collections (74.41%) were likely or very likely to increase their use or improve their experience of the library in the future. About 70 % of those surveyed felt improving and expanding self-service options for patrons and providing more digital materials (e.g. eBooks, audio books, movies) patrons can check out remotely at their convenience would increase their use and/or improve their library experience in the future. However, the percentage of very likely responses for digital books and movies was significantly higher – with a little more than 41% – compared to 27% for self service. Improving publicity also ranked close to 70% (69.24%). Strengthening the reference department (58.45%), adding more instructional videos and information on the GCPL website (56.89%), more children and teen programs (57.34%), more information and instruction for eReaders (54.82%), and more programs for adults (53.24%), were all rated likely or very likely by a majority of respondents.



Of all items respondents were asked to rate, increasing the amount and/or availability of meeting room space for community groups was least likely to impact patrons’ library use in the future.

The chart below shows a summary of responses for each of the item rated for likeliness to improve or increase their library experience in the future (percentages shown are rounded to the nearest whole number). Complete results are attached in the report appendix.

Q 14. For each of the following, please indicate how likely you feel it is to increase your use and/or improve your experience of the library in the future.



Survey participants also offered abundant comments regarding what they would like to see – or not see – GCPL improve, expand, or change in the future. In addition to comments that elaborated on and supported the results of the above, several comments regarding the need for policies limiting the use of cell phones and the need for more separation of quiet areas and other spaces were found in the open-ended responses:

“It is very noisy in the library. People talk at full volume and cell phones ring and they actually have lengthy conversations. I think it would be nice if people could at the least put their phones on vibrate and when they get a call, go outside. And maybe in the future there could be places set aside for people that are actually there to work.”

“My only concern is patrons talking on their cell phones. It seems to be becoming more frequent and should be addressed.”



In addition, a number of comments, as with open-ended responses regarding children’s programming, demonstrated that Greene County patrons see value in some offerings for others in their community, even if they do not personally utilize them:

“GCPL does a great job meeting my needs and I think the needs of the community at large. I do like some of the ideas mentioned in the survey, more so for others than my own use.”

“I’m not interested in ‘growing’ with technology. I like the website and email notification when my books are at Yellow Springs. But I certainly don’t want to take away from the youth as they seem to readily understand and use all technology.”

Future Facilities Planning

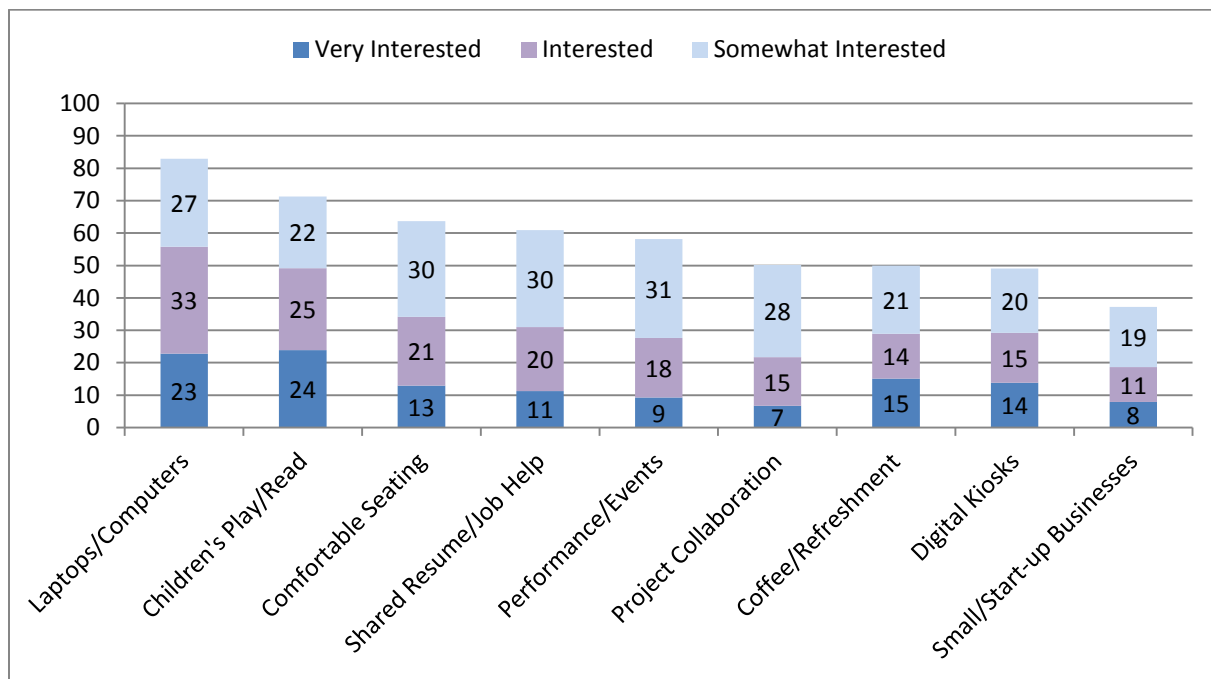
When respondents were asked how interested they would be in different proposed features being considering in future planning for facilities, levels of interest varied. Most offerings including areas that serve coffee or other refreshments, designated areas (or separate locations) and equipment to assist start-up and small businesses, small free-standing library kiosks for digital assistance downloads, designated areas with equipment for project collaboration, and areas for performance and events did not spark interest in the majority of respondents. Spaces shared with community groups or organizations to meet specific needs like resume help and job searches and areas with comfortable seating for casual conversation garnered a greater level of interest, but total percentages for very interested and interested were still only in the 31-34% range. Both of these also had approximately an additional 30% of respondents who were somewhat interested.

Almost half (49.17%) of the respondents were interested or very interested in creative spaces for children to read and play, and more than half (55.81%) indicated they were interested or very interested in ample space for patrons to use laptops and library computers.

The chart on page 9 shows a summary of patrons’ responses for each of the proposed future facility items (percentages shown are rounded to the nearest whole number). Complete results are attached in the report appendix.



Q 15. As the library looks towards the future of how best to serve the community within its facilities, how interested would you be in each of the following being considered as part of those facility plans?



Communication Efforts

In terms of communication, 80.39% of the respondents indicated the website is an important method of obtaining information about GCPL and another 13.98% consider it somewhat important. In addition to the website, emails ranked high among respondents with 79.11% indicating this is an important communication method and another 15.93% said it was somewhat important. These also were the top two methods for accessing or being made aware of the survey, although the website was a distant second in that instance. Although electronic communications seemed popular among respondents, 81.12% indicated that text messages were not important. Only 34.40% believed the “Library Links” newsletter is important, but another 37.57% felt it was somewhat important. A majority (60.55%) indicated information distributed at their child’s school is not important, however considering 38.11% of all respondents reported having children living in their household, this does seem to be a valued communication method for parents.

Getting information about GCPL from others in the community/by word of mouth is a somewhat to very important method for 58.88% of the respondents. Although 41.33% did not consider presentations by library staff at community events or meetings important, nearly 95% consider information obtained in their library an important way to get information about GCPL and nearly a third of all respondents (32.98%) feel it is very important.



Most of the respondents did not consider social networks important in terms of receiving information about GCPL. More than seventy percent (71.80%) did not consider Facebook important, and 89.54% did not consider Twitter important. More than sixty percent (64.08%) of the respondents did not believe television is an important method of obtaining information about GCPL, and more than half did not consider the radio (57.31%), Dayton Daily News (51.87%) or suburban newspapers (51.48%) important sources. However, the percentages for radio and television, in particular, are interesting considering GCPL has not actively used these communication methods for some time. While GCPL has not used newspapers for advertising, they do occasionally include news and event items about GCPL.

In terms of future communication efforts, respondents' input regarding the importance of the various vehicles/methods very closely mirrors those of current sentiments. While the survey results indicate that the majority of respondents feel informed about the services and programs available with GCPL (36.18% strongly agree, 41.53% agree), nearly 70% (69.24%) feel that increasing publicity about the library's programs and services would likely increase their use or improve their experience with GCPL in the future. The library should continue to utilize current methods of communication in the future, expand on the ones that are most valued by patrons, and not rule out methods of communication in the future that have the potential to reach residents who are not existing regular patrons as well.

Successful communications are a two-way street, and the survey indicates that GCPL is doing a good job of receiving information and suggestions from their patrons as well. Numerous comments in the open-ended responses expressed appreciation for GCPL's seeking patrons' input through the survey, and more than 80% of those surveyed agree (47.67%) or strongly agree (34.17%) their input and suggestions about library materials, programs, and services are welcomed and seriously considered by the library and its staff. In addition, comments from patrons in the open-ended responses indicated that the survey not only functioned as an information-gathering tool but also as an information-delivery device for some patrons:

"This survey has made me consider looking into other resources (digital) that I had not considered!"

"I don't use the website. I will check it out. I would like to see about downloading books on my nook if it is possible."

"On the survey today, there were a couple of things I didn't know anything about: borrowing ebooks and digital music downloads. They sound interesting. I'd love to know more."



Conclusion

The online survey conducted with Greene County library patrons provides the GCPL Administration and Board of Trustees with some valuable insights and information that will undoubtedly aid the library system as it shapes its vision of the library system for the future.

Overall, the survey results demonstrate GCPL is doing a very good job of providing a variety of library services to Greene County residents. Most GCPL patrons report they find facilities to be welcoming and comfortable, receive prompt and helpful service from staff, regularly find the resources and materials they are seeking, and feel GCPL has materials and programs that reflect the residents in their community.

GCPL patrons place high value on many “traditional” library offerings such as print materials, children’s programming and quiet reading spaces. Significant percentages of patrons also welcome, value and utilize newer technology including expanded digital materials and online resources. Patrons believe GCPL is “ahead of the curve” in terms of technology, and are fairly open to GCPL growing or adding new offerings in the future – especially if it is not at the detriment of traditional offerings. This attitude is likely due at least in part to the approach GCPL has taken over the past year to actively communicate with patrons, staff, and residents in regard to digital materials as part of their community engagement, research, and planning process. In general, GCPL patrons also seem to appreciate services that they may not use themselves, because they see the value provided to others in the community.

The survey data clearly indicate the most important component to GCPL successfully serving patrons thus far is friendly, helpful staff. Having staff members that are pleasant, knowledgeable and available to assist patrons with their questions and requests – especially when any changes to services, materials, facilities, etc. come about – will be vital to GCPL successfully serving Greene County residents in the future.

Ongoing communication with patrons and the broader community will play an increasingly important role as GCPL moves forward. Utilizing a variety of communication methods is recommended to be most effective – particularly in reaching residents who are not existing or frequent patrons. However, the survey data do indicate the GCPL website and email are preferred and effective options for existing patrons and should be a main component of future communication plans. In addition, most patrons report they feel their input and suggestions are welcomed and valued by GCPL. Continuing to provide regular opportunities for patrons to offer their suggestions and feedback to GCPL, as with the online survey, is important to sustaining patron satisfaction in the years to come.