

**Memorandum**  
**March 20, 2006**

To: Boulder Public Library Commission  
BPL Master Plan Committee  
BPL Staff

From: Susan Hartman, Library Administrator

Subject: February 2006 Library User Survey - Result Highlights

Over a four day period in February 2006, users at the Main library and at the Reynolds and Meadows branch library facilities were asked to complete a survey questionnaire. A total of 1233 survey questionnaires were completed. 2006 results are compared with historical survey data where applicable.

1. *Facility visits.* Frequent users of a given facility, Main, Meadows or Reynolds, also visited one or both of the other BPL facilities in the past year. Frequent users of Meadows or Reynolds also use Main with moderate frequency.
2. *Mode of transportation.*
  - A higher percentage of Meadows and Reynolds users usually drove to their respective library facility, 74% and 62%, than did Main users (61%).
  - Main had a higher percentage of users biking (12%) or bussing (7%) than did either branch.
  - Meadows users virtually never use the bus as a means of transportation to that facility.
3. *User Facility Preference.* An open-ended question asked respondents why they prefer to use one facility over another. The overwhelming response from Reynolds and Meadows users was that the location was convenient and close to home. A majority of the Main library users also cited location but added greater book selection as a reason for preferring to use the Main library.
4. *Remote Website Access.* 54% of all respondents had accessed the library's webpage remotely. Only 13.5% did not know library services could be accessed from a remote location.
5. *"Satisfaction"*
  - Main, Meadows and Reynolds respondents were generally satisfied/strongly satisfied with facility locations (96% satisfaction rate), helpfulness of staff (94%), and library furnishings and atmosphere (91%). Safety/security at the facilities did not appear to be a significant issue for any facility users, with 95% of Meadows users, 96% of Reynolds users and 88% of Main users noting they were strongly satisfied or satisfied with security of the library environment.
  - Users were less satisfied with the facilities' parking (80% satisfaction rate), hours (77%) access to library internet computers (69%) and library meeting rooms (65%). Though signage

in the main library parking lot states library users do not have to pay, for some users the signs are not clear. Several open-ended comments noted dissatisfaction with being required to pay for parking when using the library. One in five of Reynolds and Meadows users stated dissatisfaction with the branch hours, a not surprising result as both facilities have seen their weekly hours reduced in recent years.

- Service or program weaknesses (dissatisfaction). Users were even less satisfied with specific collection components including non-print adult materials in CD, video and audio book format (59% satisfaction rate) and Spanish language materials (36%). The popularity of non-print materials and a corresponding high circulation rate generally results in a desired item already being checked-out, which may contribute to the dissatisfaction rating. The Spanish language collection is limited, particularly at the branches. Needed attention to this area is recognized.

5. *Demographics.* Branch library users are older, have higher incomes and are less ethnically diverse than those using the Main facility. For all library users, 31% reported having children under 18 years old living at home; in the 2000 census 21% of Boulder households reported having children under 18 years old at home. No one facility draws significantly more users with children when compared to the other library facilities.

The 2004 library user survey found that 30% of the non-student respondents reported household incomes under \$15,000, a significant spike from previous surveys. In 2006, 15% of the non-student library users reported a household income under \$15,000, and is more in line with the results from 2002 (17%), 2001(18%) and 2000 (19%). In the 2000 census, 16.7% of city of Boulder (student and non-student) households reported income levels under \$15,000.

Our users' place of residency has been tracked over several survey years. There has been little change from previous survey results, with about 17% of 2006 BPL users living in unincorporated Boulder County or in Boulder County communities that do not fund libraries, 6% living in Boulder County cities that do have their own public libraries and 70% residing within the Boulder city limits. About 6% of users live outside of Boulder County and include-out-of state visitors.

6. *Open-ended questions.* The full survey report contains appendices with the verbatim responses to open-ended questions, by branch. Many of the "what one improvement would you like" responses fell into the following groupings (groups are listed in no particular order):

- more, better - books, non-print materials
- more - internet computers
- more - hours
- more - seating, furnishing
- less - children's noise
- more - programs

The open-ended comments, in many cases, mirror the ones gathered during a non-scientific community survey conducted in 2005 by the Chamber of Commerce Leadership Boulder group and a 2005 informal 'short survey' of library users.