

**Thomas Ford Memorial Library
2012 Community Survey and
Parent and Tween/Teen Focus Groups**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEMOGRAPHICS

Thomas Ford Memorial Library conducted a paper and online survey beginning January 29 and ending February 29. A total of **955 surveys were completed** (782 paper, 173 online). The vast majority of respondents (97%) live in Western Springs, with another 3% who work in the community.

A focus group was conducted with 15 parents of children ages 3-10 on February 15, 2012. A focus group was also conducted with 10 students in 6th through 11th grade on March 8, 2012. All participants were residents of Western Springs.

All statistics provided below are results of the survey. Comments from the focus groups have been added, as they relate to survey results.

LIBRARY USE

Most reported using the Ford Library weekly (36%) or monthly (35%), followed by 21% saying they use it "A few times a year." Only 1% said they "never" use the library.

A majority (66%) use the Ford Library weekdays between 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Another 49% visit on Saturdays, 43% Sundays, and 35% weekdays between 5-9 p.m. Parents suggested the best time for programs for elementary age students is 4-5:30 p.m., and 9:30-11 a.m. for preschoolers on weekdays. They also thought mid-Saturday afternoons (2-4 p.m.) and Sundays were good times for family programs. The middle school teens thought after school was a good time for programs, however, the high school students prefer early evenings due to after school activities. All the teens agreed that they would not attend Saturday programs, but would attend on Sundays.

Of those who "never" use the library, most (36%) indicated use of other libraries as the reason. More than half (51%) mentioned a variety of libraries, e.g. Westmont, Oak Brook, Elmhurst, Senior Center library, or a church library. However, 43% mentioned using the La Grange Library, and 33% said they use the Hinsdale Library. Very few of those who never use the Thomas Ford Library gave reasons for other library use: 5% mentioned "more convenient parking," 4% said they have more convenient hours, are closer to home or workplace, or that they "offer more of what I want."

Of those who "never" use any library, 16% said they "can find what I want on the Internet" or "like to buy" materials. While 11% said their mobility is limited or they are confined to home, a small number (7%) said they "don't know what the library has besides books." Only 5% said they aren't interested in library services at all.

Some 65% of Thomas Ford users said they also use other libraries because they "offer materials that Ford doesn't" (35%), are close to their home or workplace (19%), or have programs/services that TF doesn't (7%).

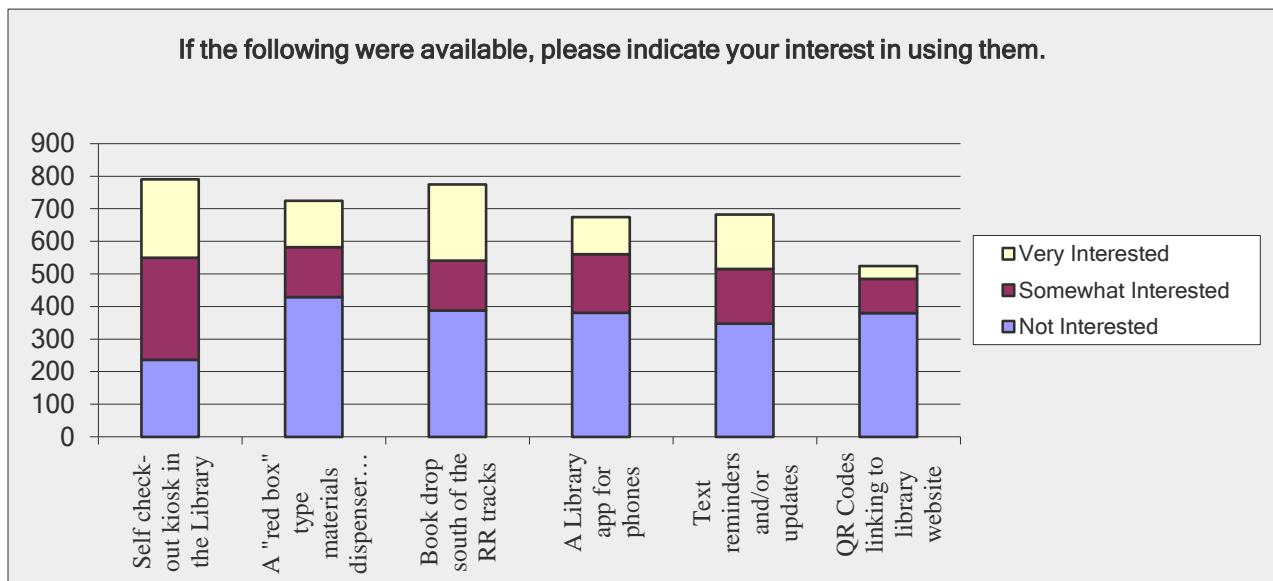
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Most (78%) respondents said they learn about books they choose to read from friends, or rely on magazine and newspaper reviews (75%). The next most mentioned source (46%) was that they "see them at the Ford Library." Some also read online book reviews (29%) and at bookstores/retail outlets (28%). 18% use recommendations from a Librarian. Some (12%) also use the Ford Library website or blogs (1%). Among those who made comments on the survey, several mentioned in-Library special displays.

Of those who use Ford Library, the most-often mentioned technical service used was getting an email reminder about materials or programs (48%), followed closely by using the online catalog from home or work (47%). Forty percent (40%) said that they or their children have used computers in the Library, with 21% saying their children accessed the Internet at the Library. Some 21% learned about Library programs on the website, with 16% registering for programs there. Another 17% have brought their laptops and used the Library's Wi-Fi, and 13% used the Library's online services such as Novelist or Mango.

Among the comments were indications that many did not know about all of the electronic services the Library offers.

When asked about potential new services, 70% said they were "somewhat" or "very" interested in a self check-out kiosk in the Library, however, there were a number of comments about retaining the personal, "human" touch. Some 50% were interested in a book drop south of the RR tracks and 49% in text reminders. Most (59%) were **not** interested in a "red box" type materials dispenser south of the RR tracks, QR codes linking to the Library website (72%), or a Library app for phones (56%).



When asked about Adult Programs, most online respondents (28%) said that they don't attend programs, and 53% overall skipped the question, with several comments expressing the lack of time, not desire, to attend Adult Programs. The most popular among adult programs was Friday at the Ford (25%), followed by crafts (20%) and history lectures (18%). Book discussions and art lectures attracted 14% each. Several seniors asked for Adult programs to be scheduled in the daytime due to difficulties driving at night and other conflicts. There were 124 suggestions for adult programs, with a number mentioning gardening, cooking or skills-based sessions. Parent focus group participants said they would **not** be interested in adult programs simultaneous with drop-off children's programs.

Children's and Teen Programming

Summer Reading Club was by far the most popular children's program (32%), followed by Storytimes (17%) and outside performers (16%). There were 59 suggestions for children's programs in the comments, including comments that some didn't know about all of the programs listed.

Books (35%) and computers/Internet (23%) were the most-used homework helpers for students. Another 20% got assistance from the librarians, and 14% use the Library's website. Having a quiet space to study was frequently reported as being most important.

Parents in the focus group wanted programs for their young children on Teacher Institute days and school holidays, and like the Story Hour sessions so much that they wanted less time between sessions, saying their kids ask when they can go back. They felt other libraries in the area have more hands-on activities in their children's departments such as puzzles, toys and crafts, which they like. New program suggestions included a book club for kids, game afternoons/evenings and project type programs (e.g. puppet making). They also wanted programs to have a narrower age margin for participants (e.g. 6-8 years instead of 6-10), saying the older kids don't like attending with younger ones. Many were not aware of the online resources available on the Library website.

The teens like active programs and anything with food. Favorites they mentioned were Chocopalooza, gingerbread house creation, and flip flop decorating. They suggested outdoor activities in warm weather such as a street party outside the Library or water balloon fights, and indoor programs such as Open Mike Nights or karaoke for kids. The younger students said they would like a Movie Night if it was a more current movie, but the high school students said they wouldn't come if it was anything other than a PG-13 or R movie. The older students like the Exam Cram. All liked the quiet study room and study carrels, but the younger teens also mentioned wanting spaces where they can make noise, such as a room with air hockey, food, comfortable chairs, computers with games, etc. The younger teens said they like "hanging out" on the train in the children's section, and want colorful spaces.

Most of the teens didn't like e-readers. Only one mentioned using one regularly.

WHERE THEY LEARN ABOUT THE LIBRARY

The largest number of respondents (88%) currently use the newsletter to get their information about the Library, with an additional 13% saying they would be interested in using the newsletter in the coming year. The next most used sources of Library information were the website (50%), email and word-of-mouth (39%). The largest response to the question about which method of communication they don't currently use but would like to use in the coming year was for email (26%). Another 35% also read about the Library in the local newspapers and in-Library publicity. Only 31 respondents said they would use cable Channel 10 to get program information about the Library if offered in the coming year.

Many parent focus group members said they would prefer an e-newsletter, however, some were very adamant about wanting the print version mailed to them, and all complimented the print newsletter. They like the sign outside the Library to promote programs, and also suggested having some flyers directed to the children. They agreed that all children's department and overall library services needed better marketing, as they were unaware of some services mentioned in the focus group. Very few were interested in learning about the Library through social media. They suggested promoting the idea of children coming to the Library for play, not just for reading.

The teen group said they use Facebook, and a few mentioned other social media such as Pinterest and Stumble Upon, however, they said they wouldn't be interested in following the Library unless it posted "interesting" items, not just program announcements. They also would like to be able to instantly chat with a librarian online, either through Facebook or other means. They mostly find out about programs from their moms, or their friends' moms. They said they would look at promotions on the bulletin board if it was colorful and "not so cluttered."

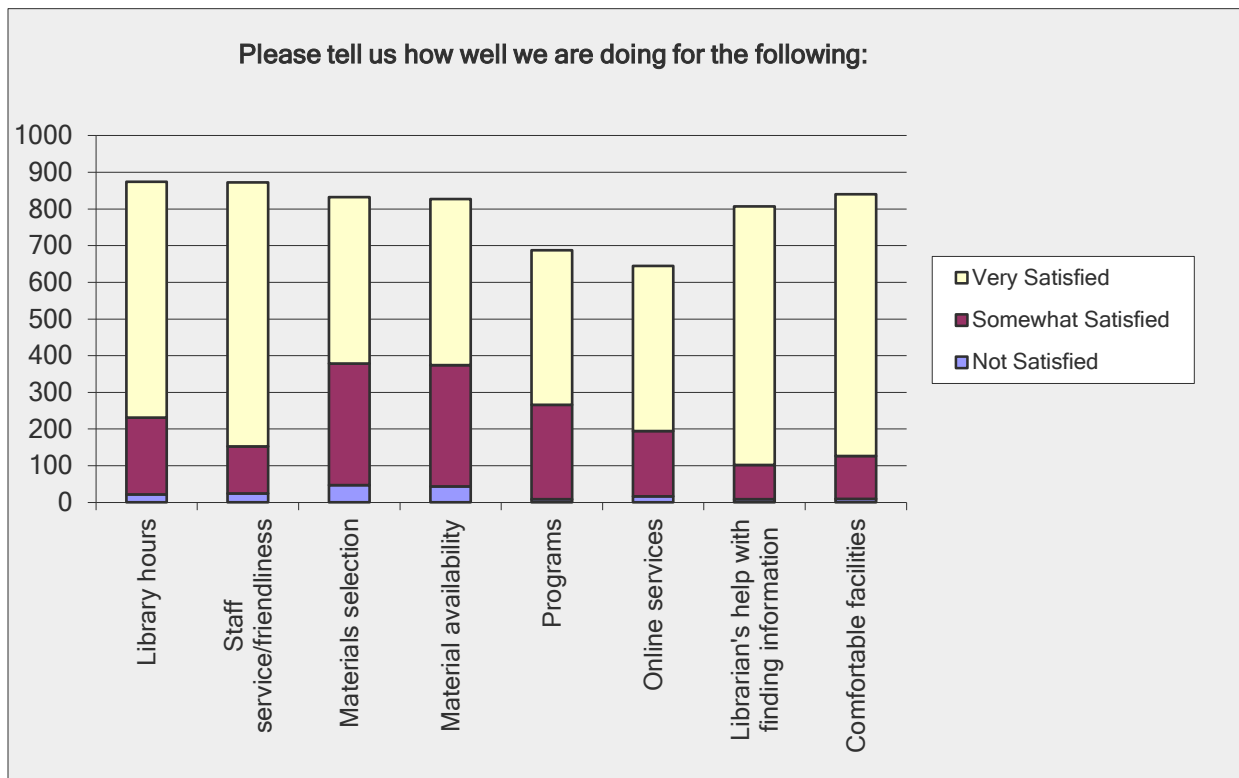
GENERAL FEEDBACK

Virtually all are "very" (73%) or "somewhat" (24%) satisfied with current **Library hours**. Overall, there were 103 comments asking for "expanded weekend hours," and another 69 comments specifically requesting Summer Sunday hours. Parent focus group participants were highly complimentary of the **Staff**, and 81% of survey respondents said they were "very satisfied" with Staff service and friendliness, as well as with the facilities. **Materials selection**, availability and online services were highly rated by 51%, but more than 40% said they were "not satisfied" with material selection and availability. This was also mentioned by both focus groups, who said they often go to other area libraries (La Grange was most mentioned) to get items they can't get at Thomas Ford. Some 77% were satisfied with **programs**. Hours, parking, materials, space and Staff (positive and negative) were mentioned most frequently among 438 comments related to the "satisfied" question.

When asked what they like most about the Library, the facilities received the highest rating with 329 comments (47%) and the Reading Room received a lot of compliments. The comments repeatedly expressed pleasure with the ambience, architecture, history and cleanliness of the building. The patrons are also very pleased with the Staff, with 299 comments (43%) remarking on the Staff’s friendliness and helpfulness; followed by location (32%), service (25%) and materials (22%). The Children’s Department received 85 comments (12%) revealing that it is a favorite spot in the Library. Improved parking, better website and many suggestions for the facilities, programs and services were among 514 general comments.

Please tell us how well we are doing for the following:

Answer Options	Very Satisfied		Somewhat Satisfied		Not Satisfied		Response Count
Library hours	643	73%	210	24%	21	2%	874
Staff	720	81%	128	14%	24	3%	872
service/friendliness	454	51%	331	37%	47	5%	832
Materials selection	453	51%	331	37%	43	5%	827
Material availability	421	48%	258	29%	8	1%	687
Programs	450	51%	178	20%	16	2%	644
Online services	705	80%	94	11%	8	1%	807
Librarian's help with finding information	714	81%	117	13%	9	1%	840
Comfortable facilities							
Comments on the above areas?						419 comments	
			<i>answered question</i>				884
			<i>skipped question</i>				71



How are we doing? 419 Comments total out of 884 respondents

Area	Comments
Facilities Total	39
Hours Total	100
Materials Total	107
Online services Total	48
Other Total	17
Programs Total	30
RefHelp Total	19
Staff Total	59
Grand Total	419

Breakdown of Comments related to “How are we doing”

Area	# Comments	% Comments
Building Issues	14	2%
Parking	10	1%
Positive Comments	76	9%
Other	15	2%
Programs	31	4%
Technology	8	1%
Reference Help/Librarians	25	3%
Staff	59	7%
Books	92	10%
Audio	20	2%
DVDs	15	2%
Online Services	47	5%
SWAN	19	2%
Longer Weekend Hours	49	6%
Open Earlier	19	2%
Summer Hours	44	5%

What do you like MOST about Ford Library? 700 comments total

Facilities	Staff	Services	Hours	Location	Materials	Children’s Dept	Other
329	299	174	13	223	156	85	49
47%	43%	25%	2%	32%	22%	12%	7%

What would you IMPROVE about Ford Library? 514 comments total

Audio	DVD	Books	Longer Hours	Open Earlier	Summer Hours	Programs & Services	Parking	Nothing	Staff	Building Issues	Other
23	45	143	54	7	25	111	87	86	18	64	41
4%	9%	28%	11%	1%	5%	22%	17%	17%	4%	12%	8%

TRENDS

Areas that emerged as those that would have the greatest positive impact on patron's opinions are:

1. Increasing the variety and amount of popular materials purchased, especially best sellers, DVDs and audiobooks.
2. Expanding weekend hours, particularly in the Summer on Sundays.
3. Offering new and different programs based on patron suggestions.
4. Having more "in-house" activities such as toys and educational games for use in the Youth Services Department while families visit.
5. Making Staff aware of the value of a simple "hello" and a smile.

Once the Board and Staff have thoroughly reviewed and discussed the survey results, recommendations for action will be determined and included in the Marketing Plan to be delivered to the Board in May 2012.