Teen Library User Survey

Final Report

July 2011

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Purpose of this document

This document describes the process of designing, administering and summarizing the results from the New Westminster Public Library's February 2011 Teen Library User Survey. This document will be of interest to those who wish to conduct a similar survey or to those wishing to understand the process and outcomes as they pertain to the New Westminster Public Library and its teen library user community.

Background

During the Fall of 2010, the New Westminster Public Library decided to conduct a survey to assess the state of the library's services to teens and to determine how the library could improve its efforts to serve this group. The decision was taken after a number of attempts were made to engage with teens and increase teen participation in library programs. In view of the library's commitment to improving services to teens, it was determined that the best way to proceed was to ask the teens themselves how they felt about the library and its services.

At the time the survey was planned the population of New Westminster was estimated to be 66,892[1]. Of this number, 4,541[2] were school-age children between the ages of 12 – 18 years residing in New Westminster. We decided that our target age group would include 12-18 year olds as this is the group of youth we wish to serve within the teen services at our library.

Once we had determined the target population, we began work on the creation, distribution and collection stages.

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[1] Taken from the **British Columbia Regional District and Municipal Population Estimates** document retrieved from http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/estspop.asp#agesex on March 10, 2011.

[2] Population Estimates and Projections (P.E.O.P.L.E. 35) By Standard Age Groups – report run at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/dynamic/PopulationStatistics/Query.asp?category=School&type=SD&topic=Estimates&agegrouptype=Custom for school district 040 (New Westminster) for 2010 with age range 12 – 18, exported in CSV format, Report run March 12, 2011.

Survey Promotion

Survey Format

The Survey was created using www.surveymonkey.com. Prior to creating the survey, the librarian in charge researched the existing literature on teen library user surveys and based NWPL's survey on examples taken from a number of these surveys. Key in the research for NWPL's survey was the work done in 1999 by Dr. Anne Curry titled *Asking Young Adults about Public Library Service: Recommendations for Making it Cool*[3]. The **Teen** *Tech Week Survey*[4] of 2009 was also consulted for examples of teen issues and possible questions. The resulting survey consisted of 10 close-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions.

The goal was to retrieve the majority of responses online and we also provided printed copies of the survey to those who did not have ready access to a computer.

The issue of teens' privacy arose during design of the survey. We were not permitted to connect surveys to individuals and thus we could not ask for their name and contact information right on the survey form. We needed to gather name and contact information for those completing the survey in order to include them in the prize draws. To work around this we had them complete a survey and then by their own choice, either send an email with their name and phone number to be entered in the draw, or come to the Children's Department to complete a draw slip.

Survey Promotion through the Schools

Posters, flyers, bookmarks, and study carrel signs were created in-house featuring colourful images of a youth holding an iPod Touch. The survey access points and dates were included on the poster, as well as a list of the prizes, some of which were purchased and others of which were donated. Below is a summary of the prizes:

iPod Touch 4G, 8GB	Purchased by the library
iPod Shuffle 1G	Donated by a Library employee
$50.00 Gift card	Purchased by the library
$50.00 Gift card	Purchased by the library
Youth passes	Donated by New Westminster Parks, Culture and Recreation department - 2 sets of Youth Centre Membership cards, each with 2 Parks & Recreation activity passes

In order to get the attention of as many students as possible, local schools were targeted for distribution of the promotional material as follows:

- **New Westminster Secondary School (2500 students targeted)**: This is the only public secondary school in New Westminster. It has a population of 2,097 students in grades 8 through 12, and another 200 students in the alternate school located on the same site. We distributed 15 large posters and 2300 flyers, in parcels of 30 with a cover note to the Teacher explaining the survey

- **Glenbrook Middle School (630 students targeted)**: This is one of the two middle schools in New Westminster. It has a population of 630 students in grades 6 through 8 (all students had turned 12 by January 1, 2011). Glenbrook received 3 large posters and 630 flyers for all classes in the school, in bundles of 30 with the note to the Teacher attached thereto, and 100 bookmarks for the library.

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[3]See http://www.ualberta.ca/~macurry/pdf/asking.pdf (as at June 2, 2011)

[4] Mahoney, Kathy; Laszcazk, Kelly. **Teen Tech Week Survey Results** in Young Adult Library Services; Winter2009, Vol. 7 Issue 2, p10

- **Queensborough Middle School (180 students targeted)**: This is the other of the two middle schools with approximately 140 students in grades 6-8. QMS received 2 large posters and 180 flyers for 4 grade 6/7 classes and 2 grade 8 classes, bundles of 30 with the note to the Teacher.

- **St. Thomas More Collegiate (120 students directly targeted)**: This is a private school that lies on the border between New Westminster and Burnaby. The population of this school was not considered and promotion at this site was minimal. A visit was made to the teacher-librarian who distributed flyers to 120 grade 8 students and also made flyers available in the library to whoever wanted to take one.

Sample of the note to the teachers:

> **Dear Teacher:**
>
> The New Westminster Public Library is conducting a Teen Library User Survey from **February 11-23** and we are promoting the survey among New Westminster teens, 12-18 years old.
>
> We appreciate your taking the time to distribute the attached flyers to your students.
>
> Thank you on behalf of the Children's Department at NWPL – 604-527-4677 if you have any questions.

In addition to the distribution of posters and flyers, the New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) Library agreed to have their library "elves" put posters up throughout the school in the halls, library and other places students frequent. The Registrar, Laura McDonald was instrumental in accepting our packages and distributing them to all of the NWSS teachers. She also took care of distributing material to the alternate school which resides in the same building as the High School.

Additional Publicity

The **New Westminster Youth Centre** generously offered their assistance in promoting the survey. They posted links to the survey on their Facebook page, on their systems in their PC lab, and they agreed to distribute and collect paper copies of the survey.

We also took advantage of local press by publishing in the New Westminster newspapers. The library has a regular column in **The Record**. In addition, as part of the City of New Westminster, the library can post advertisements on the **City Page** found in the community paper **The Leader**. The survey opened on Friday, February 11th and the library ran a column promoting it on Saturday, February 12th. Articles were also submitted to the City Page on Wednesday February 9th, two days before the survey opened.

While the greatest promotional effort was done outside the library, time was spent in the library making person-to-person contact, promoting the survey at tables where teens were studying. Librarians also circulated through the teen section in the after-school hours asking teens if they would like to participate. The teens were generally very receptive to participating – and even more so once they were told what the prizes were! All departments throughout the library were also very cooperative and agreed to display promotional material on study tables, walls, and at the computer stations.

The massive publicity campaign both inside and outside the library was aimed at getting non-library-users as well as teens who are regulars, to participate in the survey.

The Survey

Online Surveys

A single Survey Monkey "Collector" was used to gather responses online. Survey opened at 9:00 on Friday February 11, 2011 and closed at 11:00 pm on Wednesday February 23, 12011. At the time the survey opened, all flyers and paper promotional material had been distributed, and the library had displayed promotional material for a week. The first three days were the most active with approximately one-third of the responses received. By the end of the survey we had received a total of 335 online responses. Details of how the online responses accumulated follow:

Day 1   74 responses
Day 2   39 responses
Day 3   43 responses
Day 4   21 responses
Day 5   20 responses
Day 6   21 responses
Day 7   10 responses
Day 8   13 responses
Day 9   7 responses
Day 10 12 responses
Day 11 7 responses
Day 12 13 responses
Day 13 18 responses

Total 298 responses online, plus 101 final paper surveys for a total of 399.

Paper Surveys

On the fifth day of the survey we distributed paper copies to the New Westminster Youth Center (NWYC). With the help of NWYC staff, a number of surveys were completed at the Center and draw slips were handed out by Centre staff. In all, we received 24 paper completed surveys from the Youth Center. These were added the 83 surveys that were completed at the library.

An additional Collector was added to Survey Monkey and the manual recording of the paper surveys was completed using this separate Collector.

Survey Tallies

The survey ran for 12 days, closing on Wednesday February 23rd at 11:00pm. By the close of the survey we had received an impressive 442 responses, 335 online and 107 on paper. Once these were edited and duplicates removed, we had 399 completed surveys for analysis purposes. Because we had entered the manual surveys into Survey Monkey, we were able to run reports based on the complete results set.

The number of completed surveys provided a significant body of data to work with. With a possible 4541 eligible respondents and 399 workable responses, we managed to gather responses from 399, or 8.8%, of the eligible teens. And if we look at the number of teens that we directly targeted by delivering promotional material, the number increases: 399 or 11.6% of directly targeted teens.

Initial Highlights

At first glance there were a number of salient results from the survey. Detailed results are provided in subsequent sections of this document.

- **Males versus Females**: As predicted, more females than males completed the survey – **63.2%** Females to **36.8%** Males. However, we are pleased to see over a third of the respondents were male.

- **Age ranges**: It was predicted that more of the younger teens (12-13 yrs) would be the largest group of respondents. However, it was in fact the 16-18 year olds that comprised the largest group.

- **Preferred Reading Genres**: When viewed with both genres together, the top 4 choices are: **Adventure, Mystery, Fantasy, and Humour**. Preferences by gender are very different: Top 4 male genre preferences in descending order are: **Adventure, Humour, Sports, Science Fiction**. The top 4 female genre preferences in descending order are: **Romance, Mystery, Fantasy, Adventure**. Surprising in this are the numbers for Mystery.

- **What would make teens come to the library**: The survey provided a wide variety of options for the question about what would bring them to the library more often. When taken together (both genders), the number one selection was: **Better Space (55.9%)**, followed by **School & Life Skills programs (49.2%)** and **Volunteer Opportunities (45.9%)**.

  The results of this question were different when viewed for each gender. When asked what would make them come to the library more often, females said **Better Space, School & Life Skills** and **Volunteer Opportunities** whereas males said **Better Space, Gaming Programs** and **School & Life Skills**.

- **What can the library do to improve services to teens**: This open-ended text question yielded some interesting responses, examples of which follow:

  o Open earlier on Sundays!! And stay open later on weekends.
  o Help us volunteer in places like hospitals, vet assistant, library assistants, etc…
  o Have the teen section be more distinct from the children's area so that the two are not within each other.
  o Maybe a bunch of slips for teens to fill out regarding what can be improved
  o Easier layout for novels
  o There should be programs at the library that give credits for school
  o Tu dois parler en francais pour les eleves francaises
  o Encourage reading by having a shelf of a few books where teens can vote for the most popular one (y'know, suggesting good reads to one another)
  o More older teen activities… love the yarn bombing one coming up! Will be there.

One of the more notable results was the number of respondents who asked for more teen programs and activities. We were surprised at the number of respondents (**51 out of 293)** that requested that we have more activities for teens. The surprise stems from the fact that we have had low turnout for our programs to date, yet many seem to want programs. In recent years considerable resources were applied to program planning yet few teens (less than 5 per program) attended. This points to the need to take a closer look at the reasons behind this apparent contradiction.

Detailed Results and Findings

The following section details responses for each of the survey questions asked. A number of the 10 close-ended questions have been broken down by gender to show the difference in responses. Others are simply given for both genders together. All answers provided in the open-ended free format questions have been inserted in this document.

Survey Questions with Responses

1. Which city do you live in?

The majority of the respondents – **81.6%** live in New Westminster. Because of the proximity of the library with Burnaby (the High School is right on the boundary), we included Burnaby as a separate response category and provided an Other category for all other locations.

Which city do you live in?

New Westminster — 81.6 %

Burnaby — 11.8 %

Other (please specify) — 6.5 %

(Axis: 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350)
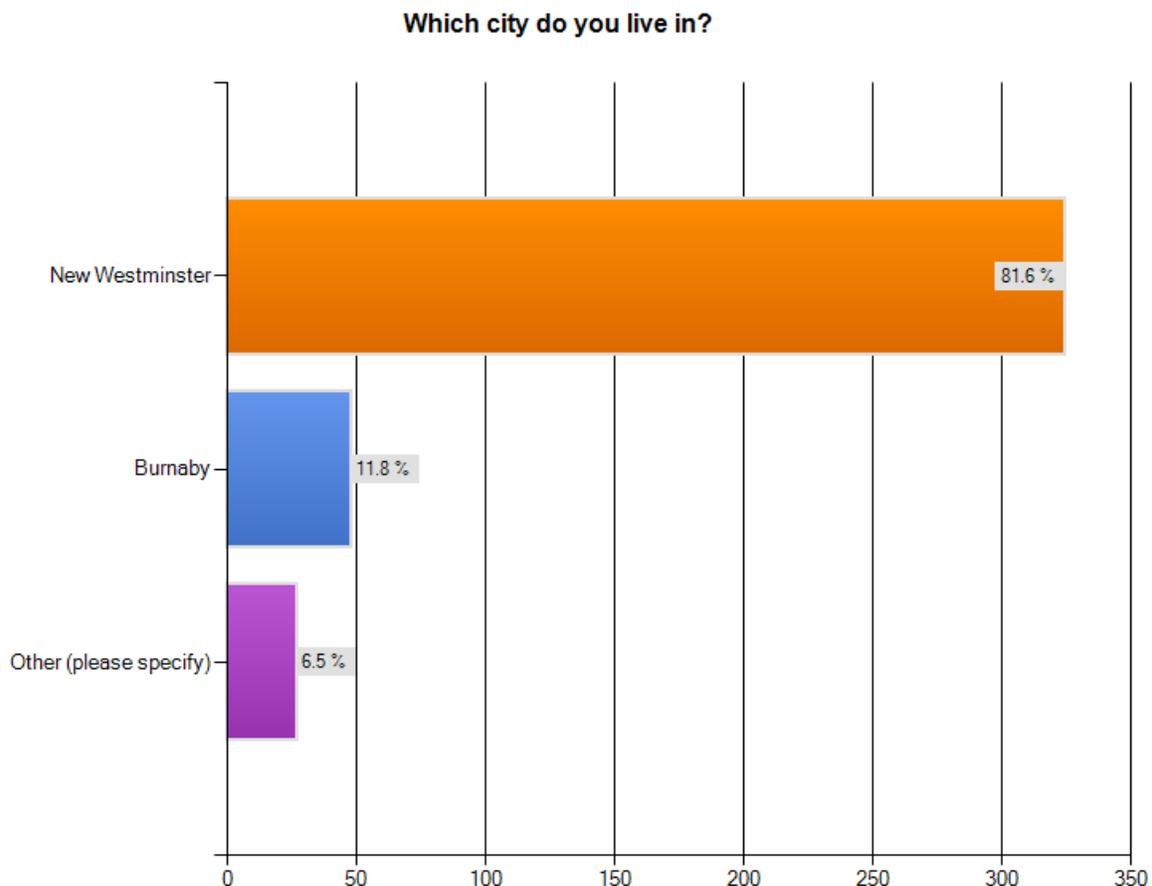
2. What is your gender?

As expected, the majority of respondents are female (**63.2%**) while only **36.8%** are male.

What is your gender?
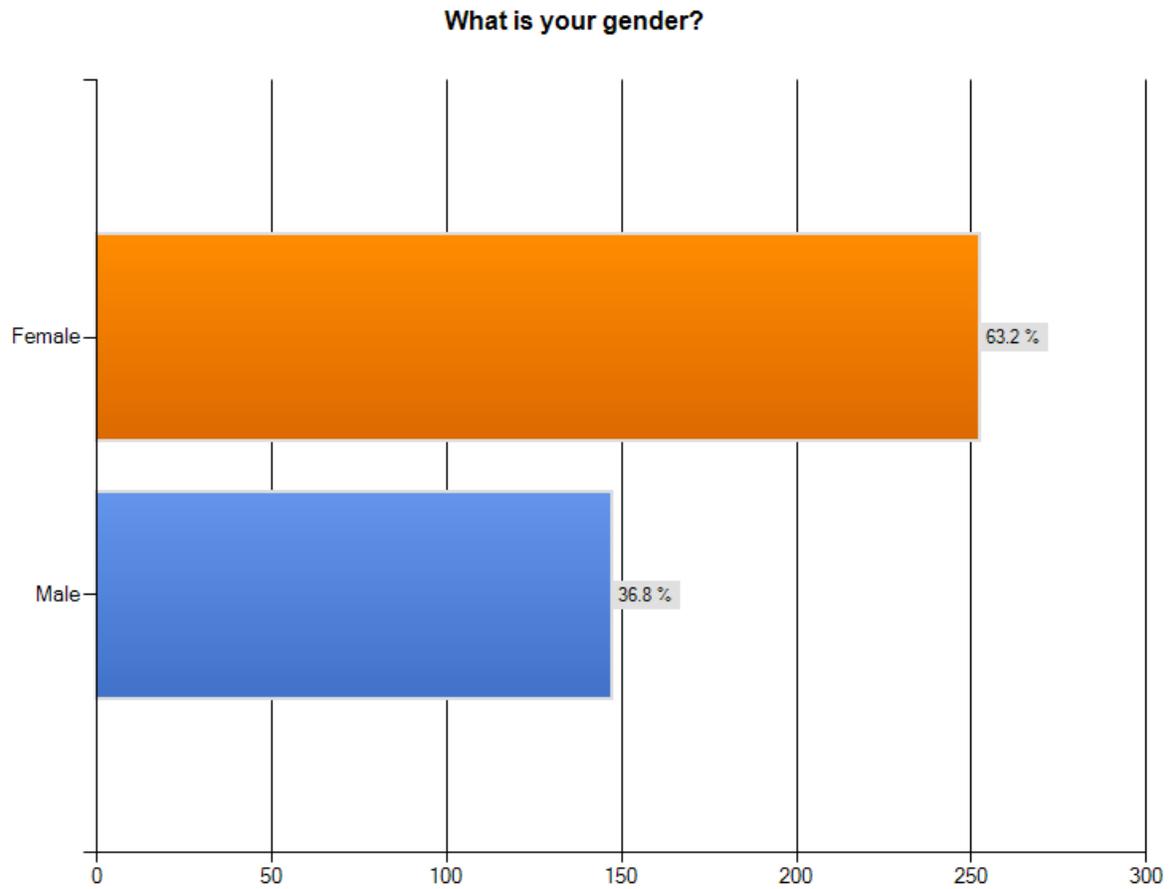
3. How old are you?

The array of ages produced surprising results. Given that our teen programming has tended to attract younger teens (12-13 years old), we expected that the majority of the respondents would fall into the 12-13 range. In fact, it was the older teens who responded in larger numbers:

How old are you? (You must be 12-18 to do the survey.)

Age	Percentage
16-18	40.1 %
12-13	32.6 %
14-15	27.3 %
younger than 12	
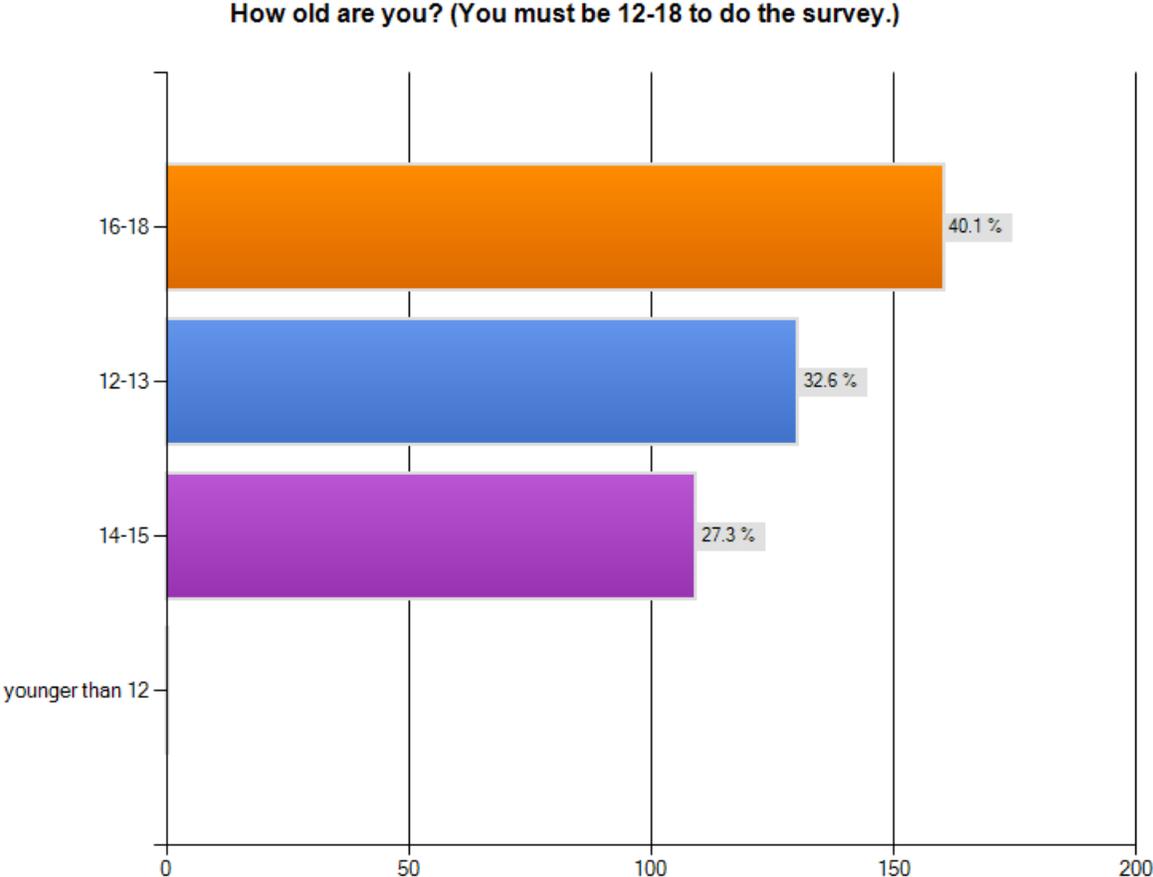
4. How often do you visit the New Westminster Public Library?

A concern when considering the method of distributing the survey was that mainly people who already use the library would be more likely to complete the survey than non-users of the library. The purpose of offering a current piece of desirable technology (the iPod Touch 4G) was an effort to offset this phenomenon.

How often do you visit the New Westminster Public Library?

Category	Percentage
A few times a week	23.8 %
Once a week	15.3 %
A few times a month	15.0 %
Every couple of months	12.0 %
Monthly	11.8 %
Rarely	8.0 %
Daily	7.5 %
Only when I have an assignment	4.5 %
Never	2.0 %
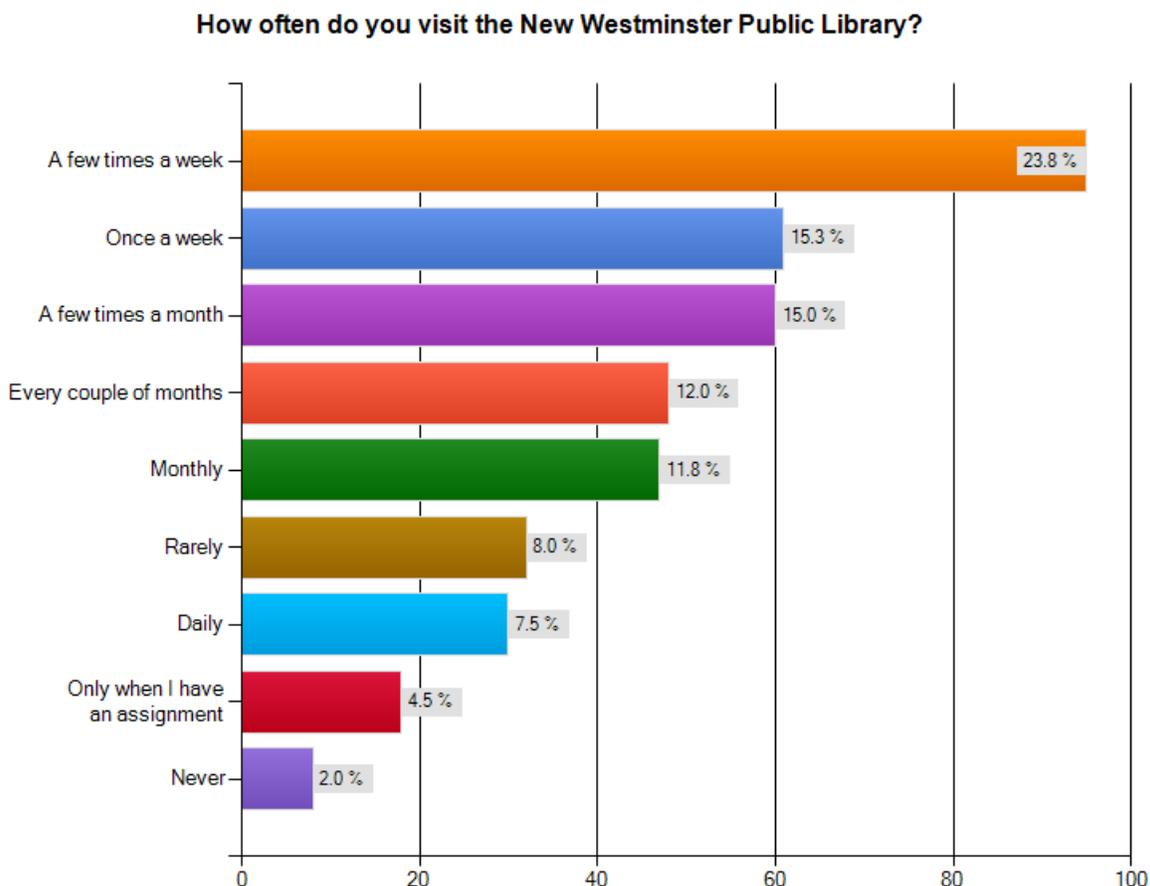
5. If you DO visit the library, what do you visit the library for?

Interesting to note in this question is that the majority of the library users come for the purpose of borrowing novels and doing homework related activities either studying in the library or taking books out for homework assignments. At times we have felt that teens were primarily coming to "play on the computers" but this did not seem to be the case given the responses.

Of the **Other** responses, some said they come for tutoring, printing assignments, to find a quiet place to read, and to volunteer (as reading buddies).

If you DO visit the library, what do you visit the library for? Please check all that apply!

Category	Value
to borrow novels	74.4 % (297)
to do homework	59.4 % (237)
to borrow homework books	43.4 % (173)
to use the computers	30.3 % (121)
to borrow movies	28.1 % (112)
to hang out	23.3 % (93)
to meet friends	22.8 % (91)
to borrow music	19.3 % (77)
to attend teen programs	15.3 % (61)
to borrow magazines	14.3 % (57)
to check email	14.3 % (57)
to go on facebook (or other social networking site)	13.8 % (55)
to listen to music/watch videos	9.5 % (38)
Other (please specify)	8.5 % (34)
to chat online	6.8 % (27)

6. If you don't visit the library, why don't you?

There were 58 responses to this question. Remembering that only 8 people said they never visit the library, this implies that of those that do come to the library, a number of them have things that hamper them from attending more often.
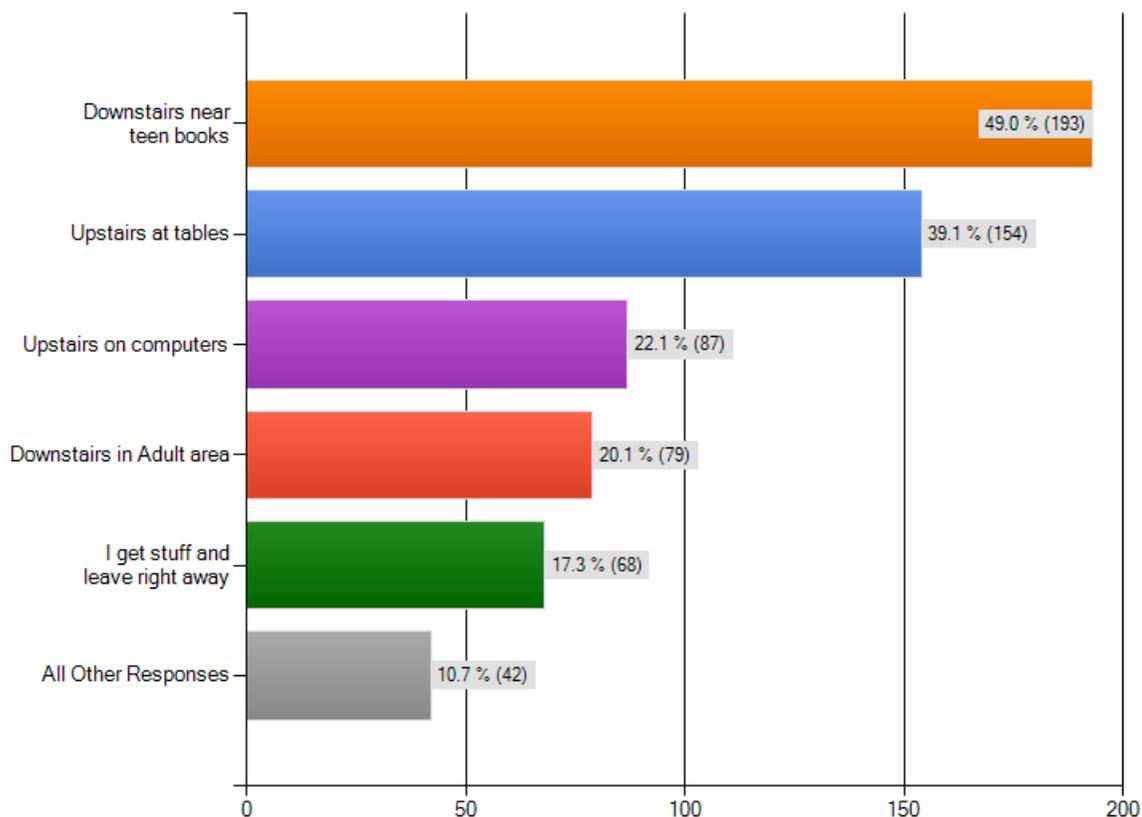
A tally of keywords in the responses tells us that almost half (22/58) of the respondents to this question stated that they are too busy to come to the library. Other responses said that they live too far away or that the library has nothing to offer them.

A complete list of responses can be found in the Appendices of this document.

7. When you visit the library where do you prefer to hang out?

Interestingly **49.0%** of those surveyed said they prefer to sit in the teen section on the main floor. Though on the days that rounds were made it was observed that large numbers of teens were seated – every day – at the tables in the Reference section on the 2nd floor where there are tables. The teen section in the New Westminster Public Library does not have any of its own tables or computers and has only 2 chairs – meaning there is very little space for teens to sit down and study or work in groups at a table.

When you visit the library, where do you prefer to hang out in the library?

Category	Value
Downstairs near teen books	49.0 % (193)
Upstairs at tables	39.1 % (154)
Upstairs on computers	22.1 % (87)
Downstairs in Adult area	20.1 % (79)
I get stuff and leave right away	17.3 % (68)
All Other Responses	10.7 % (42)

8. What do you like to read? Check all the ones you read regularly.

For most of the survey period, Mystery was the genre that most respondents chose. As we closed up the survey and produced the final numbers, Adventure was in the lead with Mystery and Fantasy running closely behind. The surprise for us was the Mystery genre. We did not have any sense prior to running the survey that Mystery was so popular with the teens.

What do you like to read? Check all the ones you read regularly.

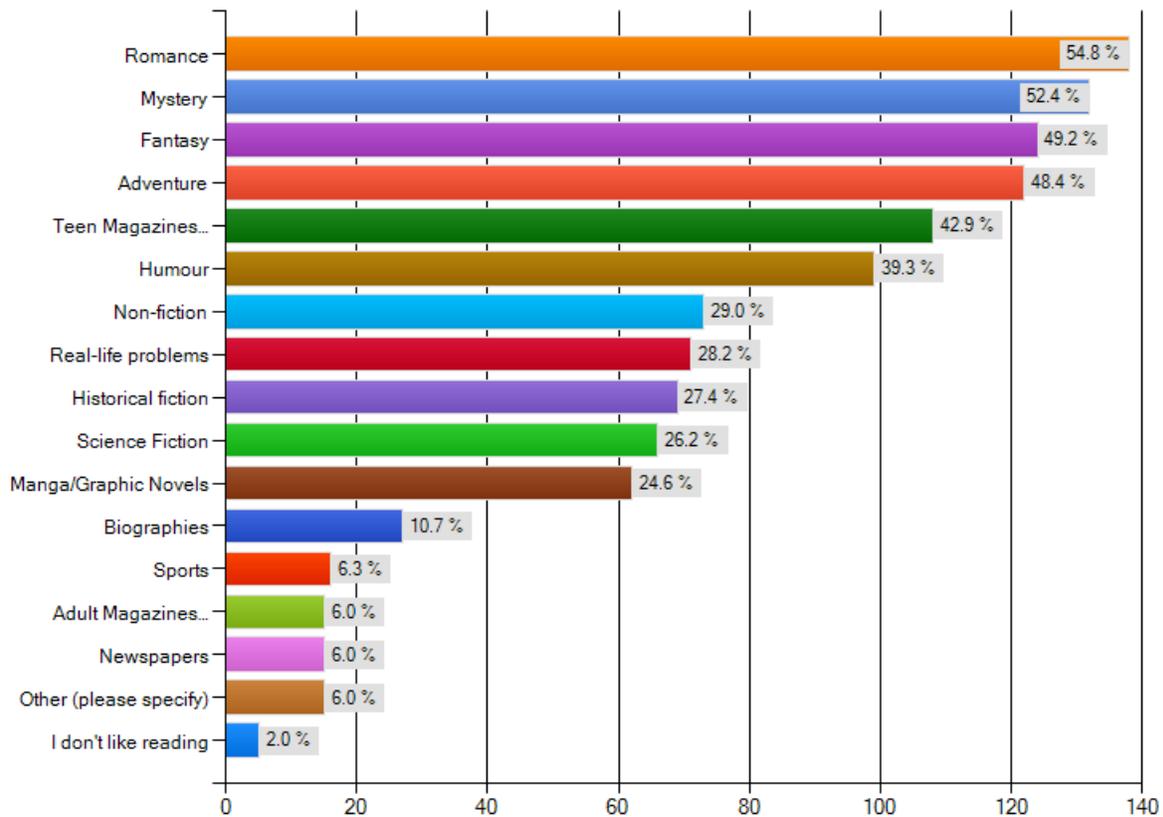| Genre	Percentage (Count)
Adventure	49.5 % (196)
Mystery	46.2 % (183)
Fantasy	44.2 % (175)
Humour	41.7 % (165)
Romance	37.6 % (149)
Teen Magazines…	36.4 % (144)
Science Fiction	30.1 % (119)
Non-fiction	29.3 % (116)
Manga/Graphic Novels	27.8 % (110)
Historical fiction	27.3 % (108)
Real-life problems	23.5 % (93)
Sports	17.7 % (70)
Biographies	12.4 % (49)
Newspapers	9.1 % (36)
Other (please specify)	6.6 % (26)
Adult Magazines…	5.8 % (23)
I don't like reading	3.3 % (13)

Once we had completed the initial chart from all of the responses, we thought it might be useful to have a look at the breakdown in reading preferences by gender. And indeed there are some marked differences.

Female Reading Preferences

When we break the reading preferences out by gender, Females prefer Romance (54.8%), Mystery (52.4%) and Fantasy (49.2%) in that order.

FEMALES: What do you like to read? Check all the ones you read regularly.

Category	Percentage
Romance	54.8 %
Mystery	52.4 %
Fantasy	49.2 %
Adventure	48.4 %
Teen Magazines…	42.9 %
Humour	39.3 %
Non-fiction	29.0 %
Real-life problems	28.2 %
Historical fiction	27.4 %
Science Fiction	26.2 %
Manga/Graphic Novels	24.6 %
Biographies	10.7 %
Sports	6.3 %
Adult Magazines…	6.0 %
Newspapers	6.0 %
Other (please specify)	6.0 %
I don't like reading	2.0 %

Male Reading Preferences

Male readers prefer Adventure (51.4%), Humour (45.8%) and Sports (37.5%). Romance is negligible for the male patrons and Mystery falls to 6th place for male readers.

### MALES: What do you like to read? Check all the ones you read regularly.

Category	Percentage
Adventure	51.4 %
Humour	45.8 %
Sports	37.5 %
Science Fiction	36.8 %
Fantasy	35.4 %
Mystery	35.4 %
Manga/Graphic Novels	33.3 %
Non-fiction	29.9 %
Historical fiction	27.1 %
Teen Magazines...	25.0 %
Real-life problems	15.3 %
Biographies	15.3 %
Newspapers	14.6 %
Romance	7.6 %
Other (please specify)	7.6 %
Adult Magazines...	5.6 %
I don't like reading	5.6 %
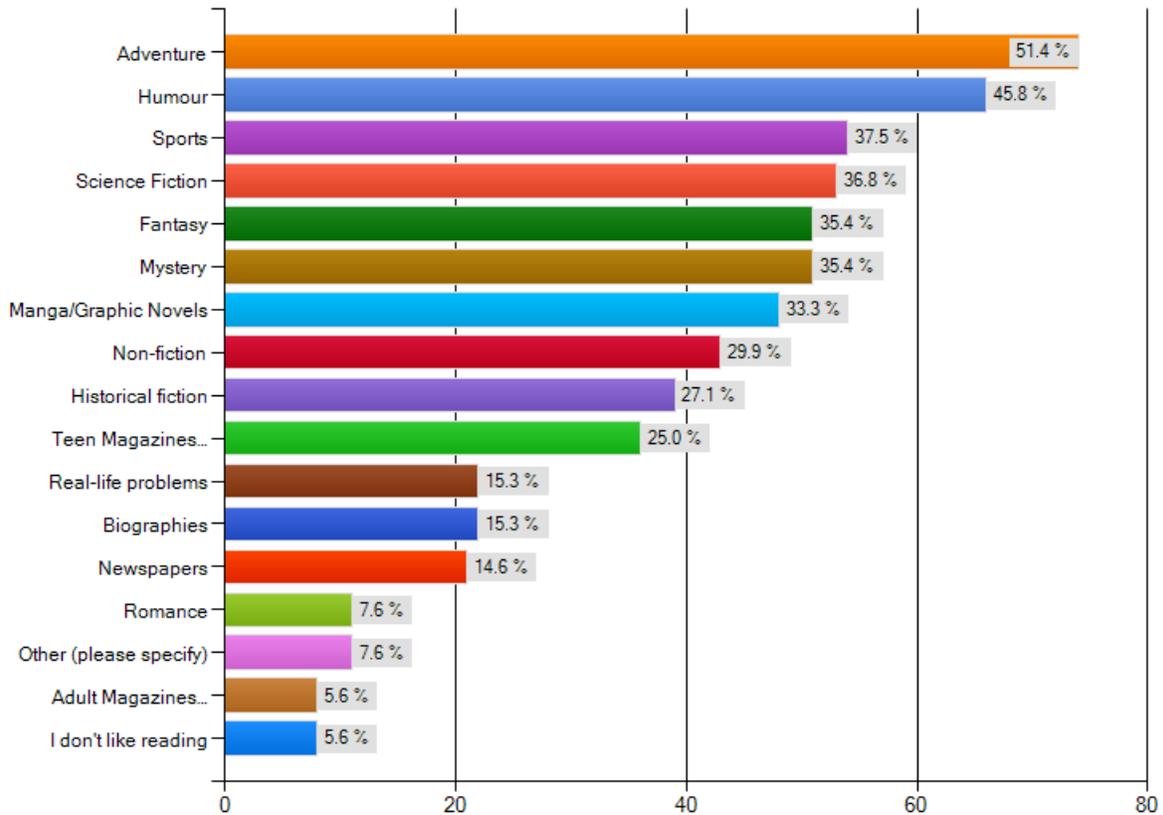
9. Did you participate in the 2010 Teen Summer Reading Club?

This question was purely for interest sake to see how many of the teens responding belong to the group of teens we bring out in the summer with the Teen Reading Club. According to our survey, 85.4% of the respondents did not participate in the Teen Summer Reading Club in 2010. What we should also have asked in conjunction with this question was "If not, why not?" to find out why they are not participating. This may be a good line of inquiry at a later date to increase summer reading turnout.

Did you participate in the 2010 Teen Summer Reading Club at the library?

No — 85.4 % (334)
Yes — 14.6 % (57)
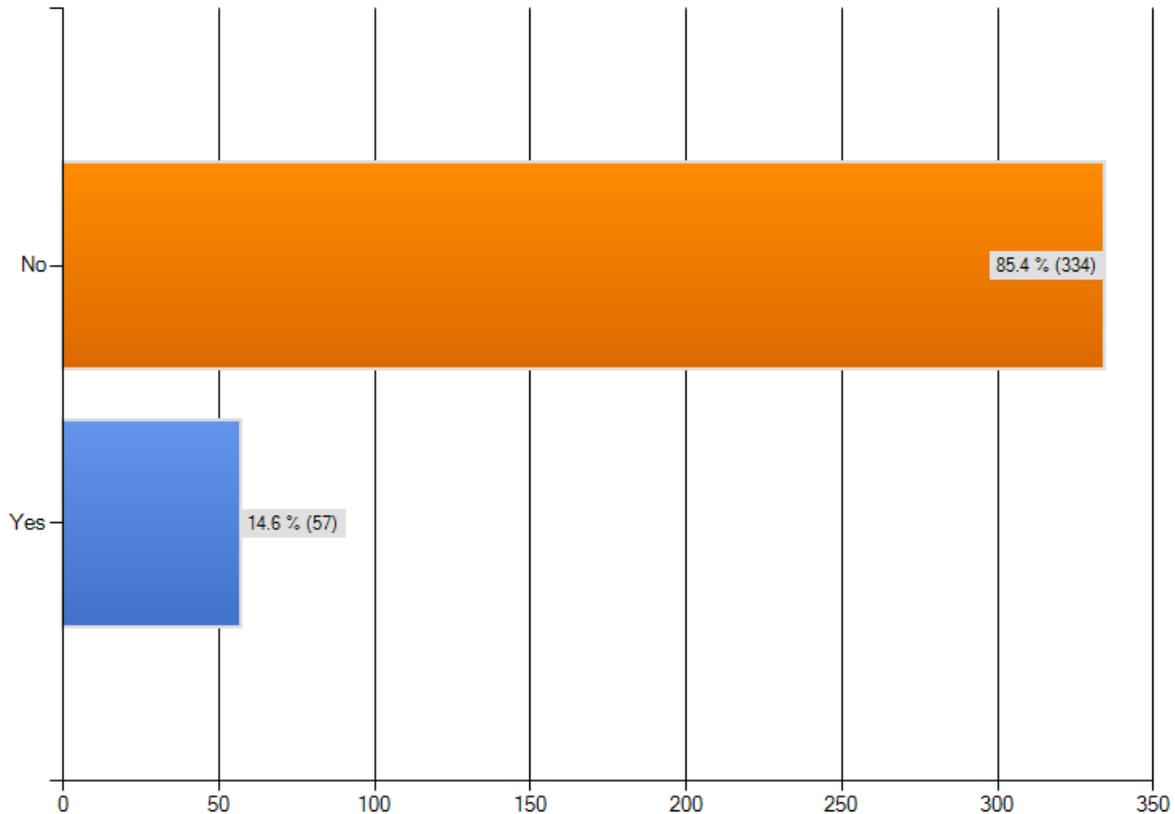
10. What would encourage you to come to the library?

This was another question that we examined by gender and for all respondents. We thought there would likely be some differences in what teens want, by gender.

The most common point raised by teens was **space** – Any questions that have space as an answer option and the questions that were open-ended all mentioned space and amenities repeatedly. Space, computers, tables for studying, comfy chairs, ability to eat in the library. This suggests that most important to the teens is the environment as opposed to the materials and/or program services.

For this particular question, 55.9% of the respondents said they would like better space (more computers, comfy furniture, able to eat), while arts and crafts, gaming and "bookish" activities received much less attention.
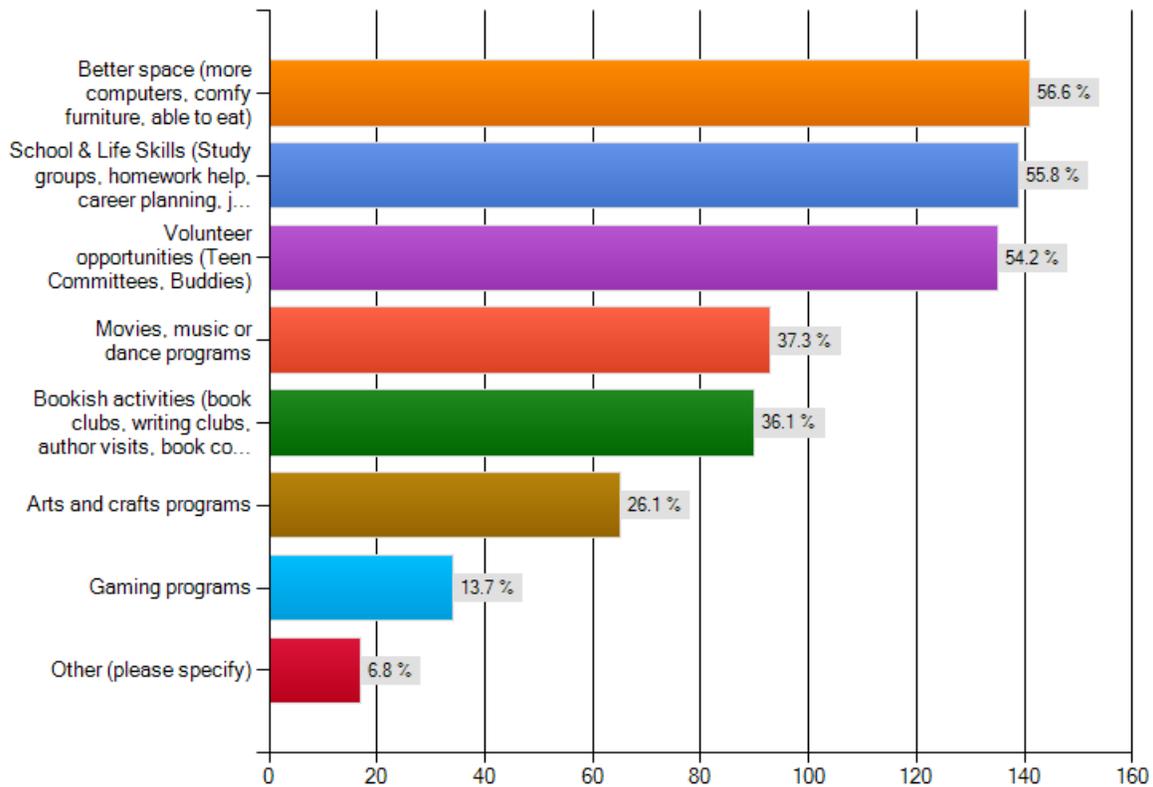
What would encourage you to come to the library? Please check all that apply:
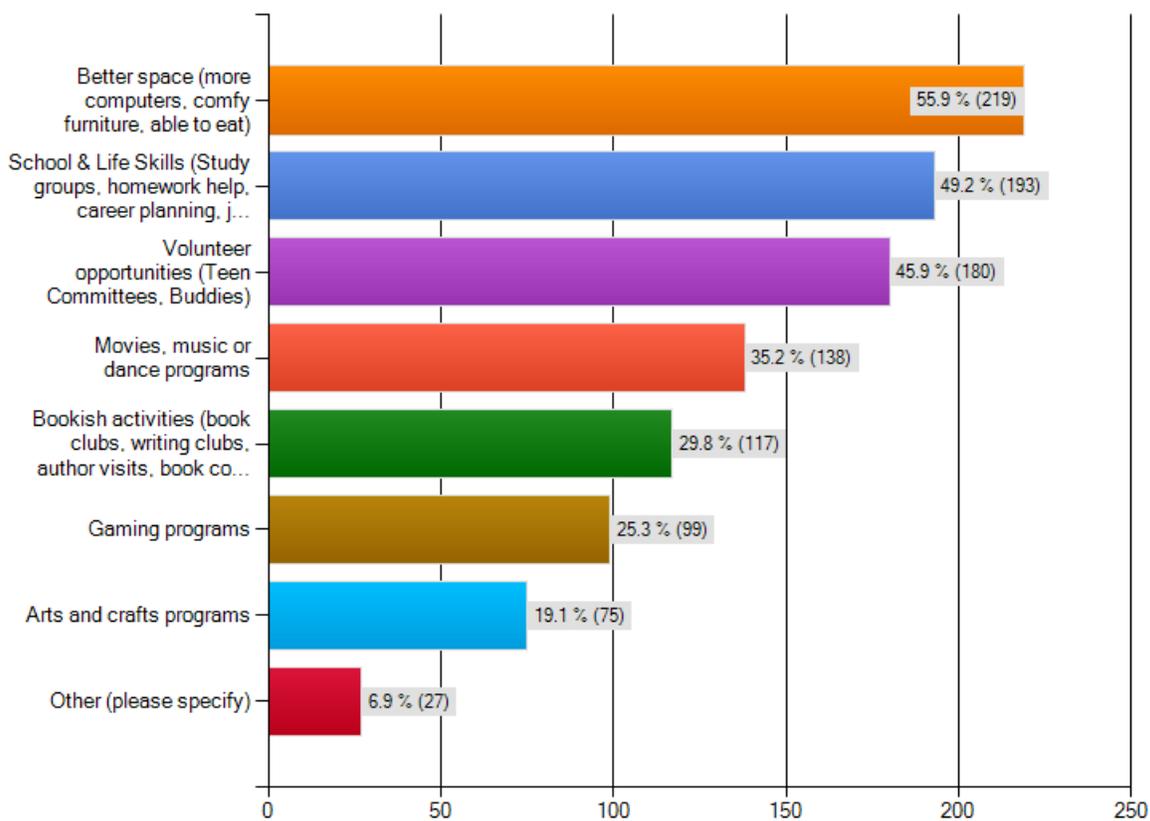
In the above graph, the top three choices for the entire respondent population include Better Space, School & Life Skills workshops, and Volunteering. When broken down by gender, these preferences are quite different for males and females

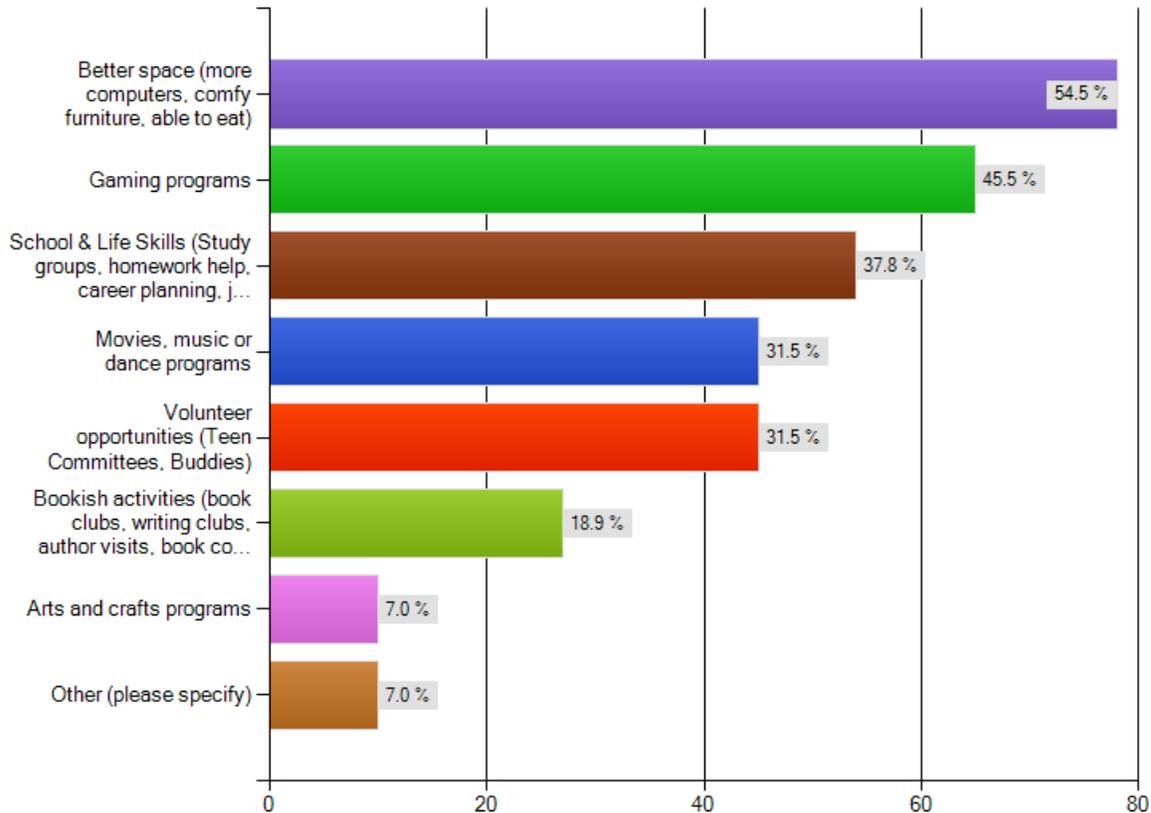**Female preferences for what would make them come to the library**.

FEMALES: What would encourage you to come to the library? Please check all that apply:

Category	Percentage
Better space (more computers, comfy furniture, able to eat)	56.6 %
School & Life Skills (Study groups, homework help, career planning, j...	55.8 %
Volunteer opportunities (Teen Committees, Buddies)	54.2 %
Movies, music or dance programs	37.3 %
Bookish activities (book clubs, writing clubs, author visits, book co...	36.1 %
Arts and crafts programs	26.1 %
Gaming programs	13.7 %
Other (please specify)	6.8 %

The female responses are the same as the over-all responses – which is not surprising given that many more females than males completed the survey. But when we separate the male responses, we see the difference:

Male preferences for what would make them come to the library

MALES: What would encourage you to come to the library? Please check all that apply:

Category	Percentage
Better space (more computers, comfy furniture, able to eat)	54.5 %
Gaming programs	45.5 %
School & Life Skills (Study groups, homework help, career planning, j...	37.8 %
Movies, music or dance programs	31.5 %
Volunteer opportunities (Teen Committees, Buddies)	31.5 %
Bookish activities (book clubs, writing clubs, author visits, book co...	18.9 %
Arts and crafts programs	7.0 %
Other (please specify)	7.0 %

As is evidenced by the above graph, Better Space is still in first place but instead of School & Life Skills being 2nd, Gaming programs is in 2nd place. School & Life Skills moves down to 3rd place and Volunteering appears to be less important to the males than the females – it is in 5th place instead of 3rd. Females were not very interested in gaming – only 13.7% said gaming would bring them to the library whereas 45.5% of the males said that gaming would bring them to the library more often.

11. What would the ideal Teen Section of the Library include?

This question was an open-ended question allowing teens the opportunity to express themselves freely in an unlimited text field. We were very pleased to have had **326 responses** to this question, with only 73 respondents skipping the question all together.

A count of recurring keywords of note resulted in the these top two most frequently mentioned items:

Books   Almost every response of course listed books a necessary component of any good teen department but many made special requests regarding the types and amounts of books:

- More new releases and more non-fiction

- More mature content, not just ones with more "sex" in them

- Books on bullying and teen life issues as well as ones with moral content and general growing up guidance books

Comfy Furn   113 respondents mention the need for a more comfortable environment including comfy chairs, lounge space, "hang-out" space, tables and chairs and couches.

Magazines   54 made special mention of magazines, mostly with reference to needing larger, more up-to-date collections and "better" magazine holders and some with more mature content. This is interesting as it suggests that the teens may not be aware of the large magazine collection we have in the Reference Department.

Computers   51 respondents requested additional computers/computer services, including requests for WiFi downstairs in teen section, laptop plugins, and catalogue computers

12. Please let us know what we could do to improve our services to teens.

There were a total of **293 responses** to this open-ended question. A review of the answers was conducted and recurring keywords tallied. Some of the more notable tallies were:

Space/PCs   67 respondents mention improvements need to the teen space, the number of computers and the furniture. Much of this information reiterates that mentioned in the preceding question.

Programs: 51 respondents request for programs, more activities. People requested gaming programs, dance and music programs as well as a need for more mature programs. One teen reminded us that not all teens are interested in arts and crafts and would like some programming aimed at older teens. (One asked for more author visits from authors such as John Grisham!). Many teens requested opportunities for volunteer service and career programs. Interestingly we have attempted to offer these with little success (i.e. no turnout). This will be something we need to examine as we move forward.

Homework   29 respondents mentioned they would like help with tutoring and homework assignments including additional pointers on how to find homework materials. There were also requests for more study space, soundproof rooms for group projects and study groups.

Eating   20 respondents would like to be able to eat in the library.

Volunteering   Many respondents mentioned their wish to find volunteering opportunities either at or through the library.

Other requests of note:
- Open earlier on Sundays!! And stay open later on weekends.
- Help us volunteer in places like hospitals, vet assistant, library assistants, etc…
- Have the teen section be more distinct from the children's area so that the two are not within each other.
- Maybe a bunch of slips for teens to fill out regarding what can be improved
- Easier layout for novels
- There should be programs at the library that give credits for school
- Tu dois parler en francais pour les eleves francaises
- Encourage reading by having a shelf of a few books where teens can vote for the most popular one (y'know, suggesting good reads to one another)
- More older teen activities… love the yarn bombing one coming up! Will be there.
- "…free printing and more computers"