

Community Needs Assessment

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Note

While the Putnam County Library System and the basic information about it is real, all data and names have been fabricated for this assignment.



Community Needs Assessment

Palatka Headquarters

601 College Road, Palatka

Melrose Public Library

312 Wynnwood Avenue, Melrose

Interlachen Public Library

133 North CR 315, Interlachen

Bostwick Community Library

125 Tillman Street, Palatka

Crescent City Library

610 North Summit Street, Crescent City

Prepared by

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Special Collections

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Meet Your Library

Today's library is your place to thrive. The purpose of the Putnam County Library System is to ensure that the citizens of Putnam County have access to the tools they need to be dreamers, creators, and innovators for our generation and generations to come. We understand that our community of over 75,000 citizens is in a constant state of growth and change and our goal is to help our citizens learn, create, do, find, experience, and imagine. To that end, we have established five libraries in key communities to serve the public: Palatka, Melrose, Interlachen, Crescent City, and Bostwick. Each library is equipped with

- Literature of all kinds for all ages and reading levels.
- Current local newspapers
- Current magazines
- Videos on DVDs
- Large Print and Audiobook collections
- Dedicated study and work areas
- Meeting rooms for public, non-profit use
- Reliable high-speed Wi-Fi Internet Access
- Public computers with internet access and printing capability
- Low-cost printing and copying
- A 'Makerspace' with classes offered to all ages for art, crafting, and computing
- Storytime and early literacy programs aligned with Every Child Read to Read
- Archival and Genealogy research assistance and programming

All Putnam County libraries align with the American Library Associations Library Bill of Rights, Article V, which states that "a person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, or background views." We pledge to carrying materials on a diverse range of subjects that will be available with free and unrestricted access to all facilities , programs, and resources.

This Community Needs Assessment

Statistical and circulation is kept for all libraries in the system. Every five years a community needs assessment is performed using this data to ensure that the materials, programs, and services we offer align with the needs of the community it serves. With this, we ensure that we are being a valued resource of our community, as the library belongs to the community it serves, and must always keep relevant and accurate to those needs.

Assessment Overview

This assessment will be created with the use of the following data sources:

Library Use Feedback

All branches of the Putnam County Library System keep accurate counts of visitor usage and report the monthly statistics to the headquarters library. This includes hourly visitor tallies, half hour library patron counts, and counts of statics such as reference questions asked, computer assistance, referral to community resources, and archives assistance requests. In addition, our library cataloging software – TLC – keeps track of circulation counts, available in many formats such as overall counts, and breakdowns by location, age groups, and title types. Lastly, attendance counts are kept for the various programs given in the library to assess community interest in them.

Community Feedback

We value the direct feedback we receive from our patrons as well. In the months before this five-year review, we offer each patron that uses the library a chance to have their voice heard by filling out an anonymous survey at their local branch. This ensures that we can see overall feedback for the system as a whole, as well as local feedback for our branches in the community.

Why no internet forms?

While we know that filling out a survey on the internet is convenient for many, we feel that the library needs assessment should be filled out by those that use the library. With an online survey, we cannot guarantee that everyone filling out the survey is a library patron, and we cannot be certain that each person is filling out just one survey. If you are a patron of the library that rarely comes in or exclusively uses our online eBook service, we invite you to call or email in and we can take your survey over the phone or email the questions for you to reply with.

Friends Feedback

Our libraries simply could not exist without the various non-profit groups dedicated to their service. Library staff regularly attends these meetings, but the Director of Library will also be sure to visit every meeting at least once in the months prior this assessment to be on the agenda and discuss their needs and concerns.

On and Off the Shelves

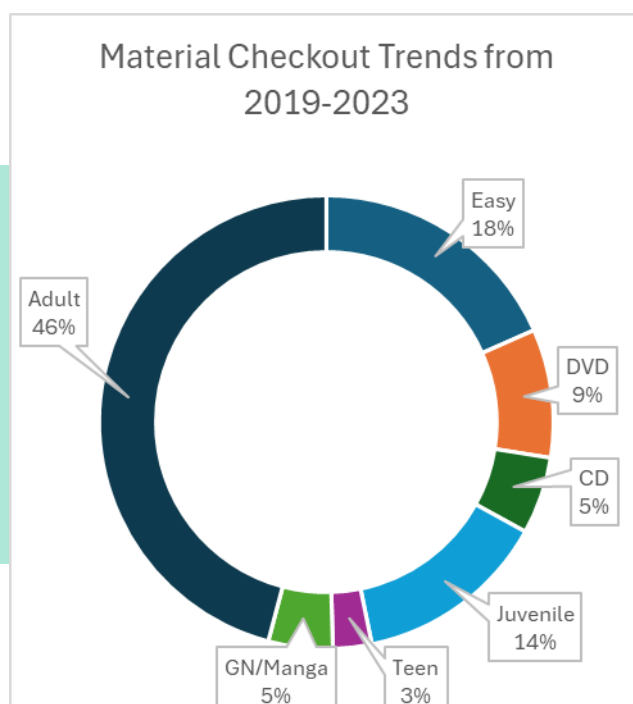
Circulation Trends

It may come as no surprise that adults make up the majority of our checkouts. At 46% - nearly half of total circulation – adult fiction and nonfiction are the top of all of our circulation counts across all branches. Easy Reader books for children ages 0-6 are a second, at 18% of all checked out books, though we do note that many books are read ‘in house’ and not checked out, so the total readership for that age group may be higher. Juvenile books comprise our early chapter books aimed at ages 7-12, and come in third on the list.

While teen readership is low at only 3%, we have noticed that since adding to our graphic novel and manga collection in all branches they have comprised 5% of our readership, with most of them being teenagers.

DVDs still remain a popular checkout item, as many people in our rural communities do not have access to the internet, or at least not internet that is fast and reliable enough to stream movies.

Audiobooks on CD and MP3 (“Playaways”) have seen interest in a very limited number. The majority of these are checked out by a select number of people. These are one of the count-restricted items, with patrons allowed to check out only five at a time. We have heard back that we do not have enough Playaways units, while most of our newer audiobooks are on CD which many people do not have access to.



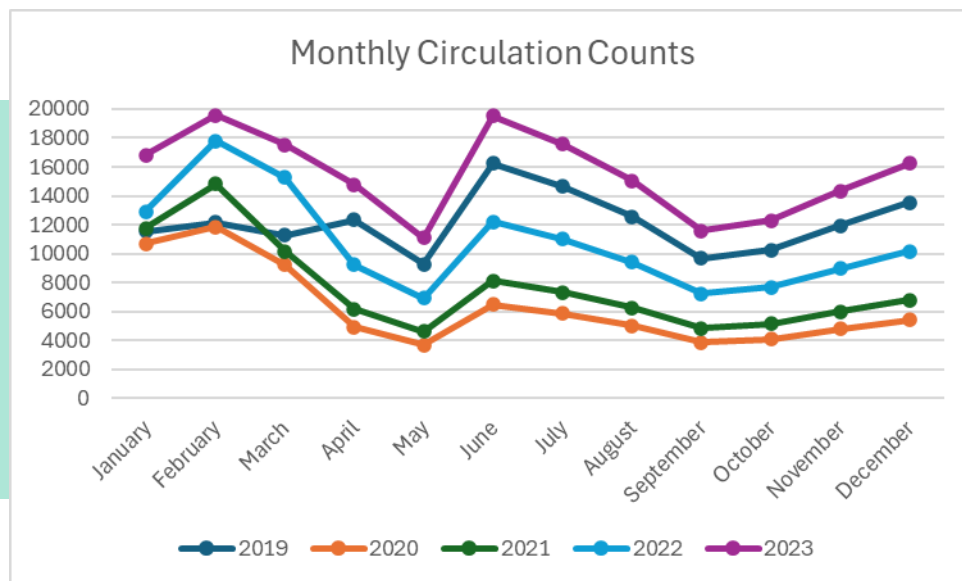
About this Graph

This graph shows the average of five years of circulation statistics for all five libraries in percentage form. The information is broken down roughly into age groups and media types, and does not differentiate between genres such as fiction and nonfiction.

On and Off the Shelves (cont.)

Circulation Numbers

Our circulation numbers follow a fairly predictable rise and fall count annually, showing higher circulation in the fall and winter by adults, a drop in circulation in the months leading up to summer, and then a sharp spike during the summer of mostly easy reader and juvenile materials for our summer reading challenge. While 2020 proved challenging to everyone, curbside pickup and online programming helped to ensure patrons had access to some library services even though the library itself was closed for several months. By 2022 we had recovered, and numbers were at or exceeding pre-COVID circulation counts.



The Take Away

Adult books are always needed on the shelves, especially adult fiction. The DVD collections in all branches need to regularly be expanded with new and current releases to ensure that access to current entertainment trends is available. While teen readership is low, the addition of more graphic novels and manga have nearly doubled the number and we believe that dedicating more resources to graphic novels and manga may prove successful in getting more teens reading.

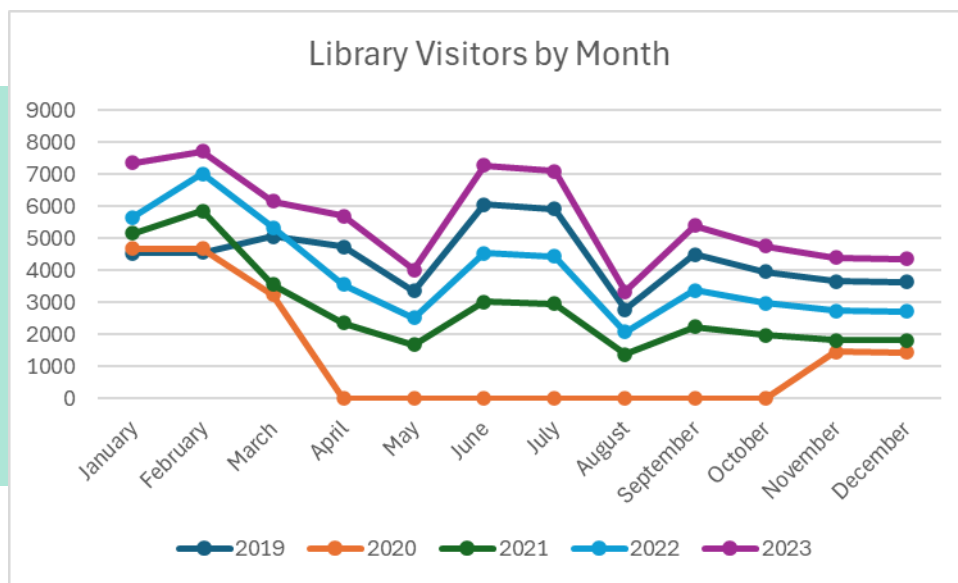
On an annual basis, more books are consumed by adults in the fall and winter while the summer circulation counts is mostly children. Late spring is the slowest time for circulation across the board, but as we are planning for summer in May we also have fewer programs. We are not certain if the lack of programs is what causes our circulation to drop, or if it has to do with some external factor such as vacation planning and end-of-school events.

Library Usage

Visitors

Our library visitor statistics closely follow our circulation counts, with more adults in the winter which may be accounted for by winter visitors (aka, 'snowbirds'). Visitors are up in June and July during the eight weeks of summer programming, and drop off sharply when we have no in-house programming in May (preparing for summer) and August (recovering from summer and preparing for the year to come).

Our visitors reported that they stayed at the library an average of 37 minutes each visit for book browsing, and 118 minutes on average for computer or Wi-Fi use.



Cardholders and Internet Use

With a service area of 75,000 citizens in Putnam County, we have over 36,000 cardholders with 52% of those having checked out a book or logged into a public use PC in the past five years. From that 52%, half of them have been active in the past year.

According to public survey, most visitors came to the library 1-2 times a month, with the most frequent reported at coming in twice a week. Ten percent of survey takers had not been in the library in the past five years, and almost a third of the survey takers relied on the library entirely for internet whether that be on the public Wi-Fi or through using our public PCs. Over half of our visitors that came in solely for Wi-Fi or PC use reported that they used our services mostly for job searches or for applying for public assistance such as SNAP, EBT, or Medicaid.

Library Patron Survey

Thank you for participating in our community needs assessment survey. Your participation will help us evaluate our library services offered and ensure that they are meeting the needs of the community they serve.

For the following questions, please check the box next to the answer that describes you best.

The library branch I primarily use is (check one):

☐ Palatka ☐ Bostwick ☐ Crecent City ☐ Interlachen ☐ Melrose

I primarily use the library for (check one):

☐ Books/Movies ☐ Newspaper/Magazines ☐ PC/Wi-Fi ☐ Library Programming
☐ Archives/Genealogy ☐ Other _____

If I come to the library to use the PC or Wi-Fi, I primarily use it for (check one):

☐ Social (email, Facebook, etc) ☐ Work (job application, work assessments, etc)
☐ Entertainment (videos, games, etc) ☐ Social Assistance (EBT, SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare, etc)
☐ Other _____

I primarily visit the library with (check one):

☐ Alone ☐ Spouse/Partner ☐ Friends ☐ Parents ☐ Children/Grandchildren

For the following questions, please check true or false.

I have a Putnam County Library Card.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
The library usually has what I need.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
If I need help finding something, someone helps me.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
The library has a diverse collection of books and movies.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
I am aware that the library offers classes on many subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
I have attended a library program/class in the past year.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
It is easy for me to get to the library.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
The library staff is always welcoming and professional.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
I have visited the library website in the past year.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False

For the following questions, please give written answers.

What can we do to improve service for you at your library?

Are there any factors that keep you from coming to the library more often?

Are there any services, materials, or programs that you would like to see offered more?

Library Programming

Programs Offered

Each year our libraries offer a vast array of programming for all ages, and at many of these program we offer a chance for feedback forms to see how we are doing and what improvements we can make.

A total of 6,386 programs were offered between 2019 and 2023 and were attended by 48,474 people of all ages and walks of life.

Participant Ages:

- 43% were for ages 0-11
- 28% were for teens and adults
- 29% were for families or all ages

Program Content:

- 18% were computer/coding
- 19% were art
- 10% were crafts
- 9% were business/entrepreneurial/adult learning
- 10% were soft skills/life skills
- 8% early literacy/storytimes
- 18% were entertainment (games, coloring, movies)
- 8% were archives/genealogy

What They Said

By and large, attendees to the programs enjoyed the content and variety. More coding classes for children and computing classes for adults were frequently requested, second only to more programs specifically for teens, especially after school manga clubs. Those who attended one program usually came back regularly, and out of all of the platforms we release programming information on (newspaper, three radio stations, flyers in schools, churches, and community centers, and our web site), it was Facebook posts that drew in most of the attendees. Many patrons requested late evening and Saturday afternoon programs for adults, hours that the library is traditionally closed.

Assessment Results

The data revealed by speaking, surveying, and statistical analysis reveals some key gaps in our services that need to be filled

1. Research should be done into the low service counts in May and August. Is it solely because we do not offer programming those months, or are external factors accounting for the drop in visitors?
2. More effort should be put into acquiring more new releases and bestsellers in the winter months for adults, while more new release children's books should be acquired to fulfill the need caused by the influx of children during the summer months.
3. When we reopened immediately after COVID in 2020 we started a program called "Grandparent's Boxes," which were themed boxes with ten books and a collection of games and activities centered around a particular like (for example, dinosaurs, fairys, or construction equipment) that they could do with their grandchildren. We only continued the program for a year, but were surprised that even in 2024 people were asking when they were coming back.
4. Teen readers have always been the most difficult to pull into the library, but many parents and teens requested more manga as well as after school manga, anime, and cosplay clubs. These may be key in making more teens part of our community.
5. Adult patrons would like to attend programs, but many of them are within working hours. Evening and weekend programs were frequently requested, but with small staffs it may be difficult to accommodate this request. It is definitely something that needs to be researched for feasibility.

We were also able to identify some good points where we are succeeding or have improved.

1. Patrons who need assistance feel comfortable asking the staff, and usually have their needs met.
2. Few patrons have difficulty accessing our library. This has long been a concern because even though we are on a public bus route, we are still outside of the city limits and fairly far out of town if one doesn't have access to a vehicle.
3. Our patrons tend to feel that our books are meeting their needs, though a few did request more LGBT and multicultural content. Those requesting such content commented that they would like more diverse topics for their children and teenagers to read, which we have been working towards as we build our collection.