MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: June 15, 2020
Author: Carol Nelson, Director, Planning & Communications
VanDocs#: DOC/2020/146377
Meeting Date: June 24, 2020
TO: Library Board
FROM: Kurt Heinrich, Chair, Community Relations, Planning & Development
SUBJECT: VPL Re-opening Public Survey Results

SUMMARY

This report is to provide the Library Board with a summary of the VPL Re-opening public survey results.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receive the report for information.

POLICY

There is no related policy.

BACKGROUND

To inform library reopening plans, VPL undertook a public survey conducted online from May 15 to 27, 2020. The survey asked respondents about what is important to them as we consider ways to deliver library services while meeting health and safety protocols. They were also asked about potential alternative services, and their comfort level with reintroducing a range of library services.

DISCUSSION

The public response was very strong, with 6,949 responses received. Respondents were primarily frequent users of VPL’s physical and digital services; the majority were women, people with
higher levels of education and income, and families without children at home. While the respondents represent a key group of VPL patrons, they do not fully reflect the breadth of library users.

To ensure that the needs of all patron segments are included, we will also be considering input we receive from partner organizations, staff through an online survey, input through community librarians, and comments received through phone calls and emails as part of our service recovery planning.

The findings showed that patrons responding to the online survey are missing the ability to borrow books, and in particular, placing and picking up materials through holds. There is overwhelming support for VPL and concern for staff safety was a common theme. There is a reluctance to participate in onsite activities such as reading on site and attending in-branch programs, and health and safety protocols are deemed important by all.
Public Survey on Vancouver Public Library’s Reopening Plans
Key Findings for VPL Board – June 9, 2020

Following are key findings from a public survey conducted to inform VPL’s reopening plans. The research objective was to determine what is most important to patrons as we consider ways to deliver library services while meeting health and safety protocols.

The public response was very strong, with 6,949 responses received (survey was in field May 15 to 27). The respondents were primarily frequent users of VPL’s physical and digital services, women, people with higher levels of education and income, and families without children at home. While the respondents represent a key group of VPL patrons, they do not fully reflect the breadth of library users. To ensure that the needs of all patron segments are included in our service recovery planning, we are incorporating input from a range of additional sources.

1. The services patrons have missed the most during the branch closures are: borrowing print books (87%), picking up items on hold (72%), borrowing items such as DVDs, CDs, magazines, and musical instruments (29%), and browsing and reading materials in the library (28%).

- When asked about other services missed, the most common patron response was printing
- Respondents under 29 years missed using the library to read or study more than their older counterparts
- Lower income respondents (<$50k per year) missed borrowing items such as DVDs, CDs, magazines, using the library to read or study, and using computers and WiFi more than higher income respondents
- Seeking information and advice from library staff was increasingly missed with age
2. **Patrons would be most comfortable doing the following in library branches “now”:**
   - Returning books at a book drop (90%)
   - Picking up items put on hold (78%)
   - Borrowing books and other materials (69%)

   - Generally speaking, men are more comfortable than women using services “now”:

   ![Graph showing comfort levels of men and women for various services]

   - For a number of services, such as meeting with other people to study/work socialize, attending programs for children, teens, or adults, and using computers, approximately one third of those who say they use these services would prefer to wait until a vaccine is available before using them again.
   - Underscoring the important role VPL plays in helping vulnerable groups, lower income respondents (<$25K/year) are more comfortable using computers, using WiFi and reading/studying/working on their own “now” relative to higher income respondents.

3. **Of the alternative services that VPL is considering offering before library branches reopen,** patrons are very likely to use:
   - Outdoor pickup of new holds (71%)
   - Pickup of existing holds that were available prior to closing (62%)
   - Indoor pick up of new holds (60%)

   - Respondents also thought that a number of services, while not applicable for themselves, would be good to offer for the community. These included computers with free internet access, home delivery, and takeout services for children.

   - Women are more likely than men to use all alternative services except indoor holds pickup and computers:
• Though percentages are small, respondents with lower levels of education are more likely to use computers than those with higher education:

• Amongst families with children under 18 at home, takeout services for children were deemed likely to be used, with slight increases with income:

4. **Of the limited services that VPL will offer in the initial stages of reopening**, respondents are most likely to pick up holds (77%) and browse library materials (31%).
5. To consider going into a library branch, patrons felt it was very important to have: enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces (86%), physical distancing protocols (75%), hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies for patrons (75%), plexiglass barriers at service desks (59%) and plexiglass barriers between computers/workstations (54%). While the majority of patrons felt that all of the below measures were somewhat to very important, women rated all safety measures as being more important than men:

- Respondents aged 70+ rated physical distancing and hand sanitizer/cleaning supplies as “very important” less frequently than other age groups
- Masks for patron use and gloves for patron use were valued more highly by lower-income respondents compared to those with higher income

6. The most popular days for library visits are Saturday (39%) and Wednesday (38%):
• The **most popular time of day for library visits** is in the afternoon (47%), followed by morning (29%), and evening (13%).

7. **Open-ended feedback** expressed by VPL’s patrons followed some key themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of VPL/VPL staff</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open ASAP</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss VPL</td>
<td>271</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarantining/disinfecting library materials</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep VPL staff safe</td>
<td>239</td>
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<tr>
<td>Want holds</td>
<td>233</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excited for opening</td>
<td>163</td>
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<tr>
<td>Want access to physical books/items</td>
<td>159</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libraries are essential/important</td>
<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital services (e.g. appreciation, requests for expansion)</td>
<td>122</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book drops/returning items already out</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be slow &amp; cautious</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for current menu model</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>General safety</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t forget those who need library the most</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep patrons safe</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure enforcement of rules/protocols/distancing</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit # of people inside at one time</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended loan periods</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total responses analyzed</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,591</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following are some examples of patron comments on the most popular themes:
Appreciation of VPL & staff

- “How vital VPL is to many people’s lives and how much VPL has been missed!”
- “I would like to consider the hard work of the staff, that it is a great loss for communities.”
- “Thank you for supporting all of us through these uncertain times.”
- “You are doing an incredible job, VPL! Thank you for all you do now and always to make the city more engaged and connected.”

Open ASAP

- “Please reopen. We need you.”
- “The VPL rocks! Reopen safe, but reopen soon.”
- “The sooner the better!”

Missing VPL

- “Please give a “shout out” to all the library staff and let them know how much they are missed.”
- “We miss the library SO bad, we can’t wait for you to re-open. You were the best place to go with our kids. Please do so carefully but re-open soon.”
- “I miss VPL.....I wish all staff all the best and hope to see you again very soon.”

Strong desire for staff safety

- “I want to be sure the staff is protected and feels safe. I love and value my library workers!”
- “Challenging. Good luck. Take care of your people.”
- “Protect all staff please, patrons can be in and out again quickly.”

Importance of quarantining &/or sanitizing library materials

- “I am concerned about a time lag or sanitation system for library materials between return and loan to a new patron.”
- “[I’d like] information about quarantining returned materials.”
- “As much as I’d like to borrow a book... because Covid19 lingers in surfaces, I'm not likely wanting to borrow any more books from VPL until a vaccine is introduced, or I know that VPL has ‘quarantined’ a recently returned book during this time.”

Patrons really miss their holds

- “I really miss my library and the opportunity to get books. I hope that the first thing you do is let us put books on hold and pick them up. Hooray for VPL!”
- “Most important for me is holds pickup either outside or inside.”
- “I’d love to put books on hold, and go pick them up. Everything else pales by comparison.”
Demographic Profile of Respondents

**Gender**

- Female: 78%
- Male: 22%
- Transgender: 1%
- None of the above: 1%
- Prefer not to say: 1%

**Age**

- 19 and under: 5%
- 20-29: 15%
- 30-39: 20%
- 40-49: 15%
- 50-59: 10%
- 60-69: 10%
- 70+: 5%
- Prefer not to say: 5%

**Note:** Respondents could choose multiple responses for gender, so totals add up to over 100%.

**Family status**

- Have children under 18 at home: 60%
- Have children 18 or over at home: 10%
- Do not have children at home: 30%
- Prefer not to say: 0%

**Formal education**

- High school graduation or less: 10%
- Some technical/college/university: 20%
- College or technical diploma: 15%
- Bachelor's degree: 25%
- Graduate degree: 10%
- Prefer not to say: 5%

**Household Income**

- Less than $25k: 10%
- $25k - $50k: 15%
- $50k - $75k: 20%
- $75k - $100k: 30%
- $100k+: 15%
- Prefer not to say: 0%