Bethlehem Public Library
2018 Community Survey results

At the end of 2018, Bethlehem Public Library presented a two-part community survey to the public asking about the types of library services they use, value or would like to see improved.

The survey was made available in late October on the library website and in the November/December Footnotes, which is mailed to all of the households in the Bethlehem School District. In addition, the survey was promoted on social media, the Chamber of Commerce website and through advertising in *The Spotlight* newspaper.

Survey results were collected through the end of November. In all, a total of 425 responses were received, which amounts to approximately 1.5% of the population. Although this is not a statistically significant representation, the results did identify some common trends and perceptions among regular Bethlehem Public Library users.

Overview: Part 1

In the first section of the survey, we asked about frequency of library use. We also asked respondents to assign a value of *Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important or Don't Know* to specific library services. A third part of the section asked respondents to assign those values to materials available to borrow from the library.

Despite our efforts to reach community members who were not regular library users, we found that the majority of those who responded were weekly library users, with 375 saying they visited the library at least once a month or more. **See Page 2: Chart 1.**

Overall, the service receiving the highest ranking was the ability to borrow materials. However, no matter which service or services the respondent valued highest, most rated the overall importance of the library as *Very Important.* A weighted value of the responses shows Online Services and Internet/WiFi were also highly valued. **See Page 2: Chart 2.**

Books, for both adults and children, were ranked the highest in a weighted analysis of borrowed materials. The breakdown also shows the museum passes and eBooks were highly valued as well. **See Page 3: Chart 3.**

Overview: Part 2

In the second section of the survey, we asked for written responses to the following questions: What do you value most about the library? **See Page 4: Chart 4.** How could the library or its services be improved? **See Page 5: Chart 5.** Is the library's current infrastructure able to sufficiently provide services in a way that meets your needs (YES/NO)? **See Page 6: Chart 6.** If, no, what physical improvements or changes to the space would you support?

Overall, many said they valued the library's selection of materials and its role as a community gathering space.

While many respondents took time to answer one or more of these questions, the number of responses to the question about which physical improvements or changes they would support were too few to break down into chart form. However, the majority of those comments noted a need to create more quiet/study space, which is reflected in one of the top suggestions for ways the library or its services could be improved.

The top takeaways from the second section of the survey are on **Pages 4-5.**

An appendix featuring the actual data from Part 1 of the survey can be found on Pages 6-7.

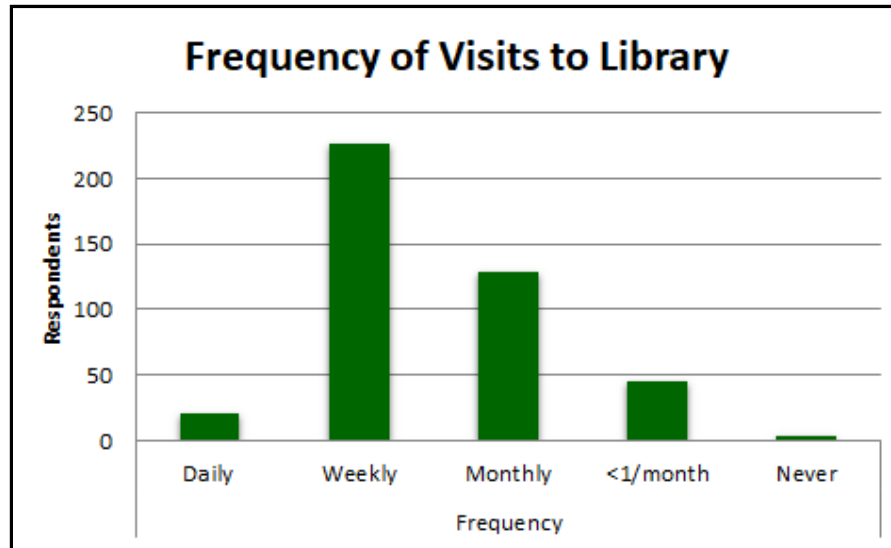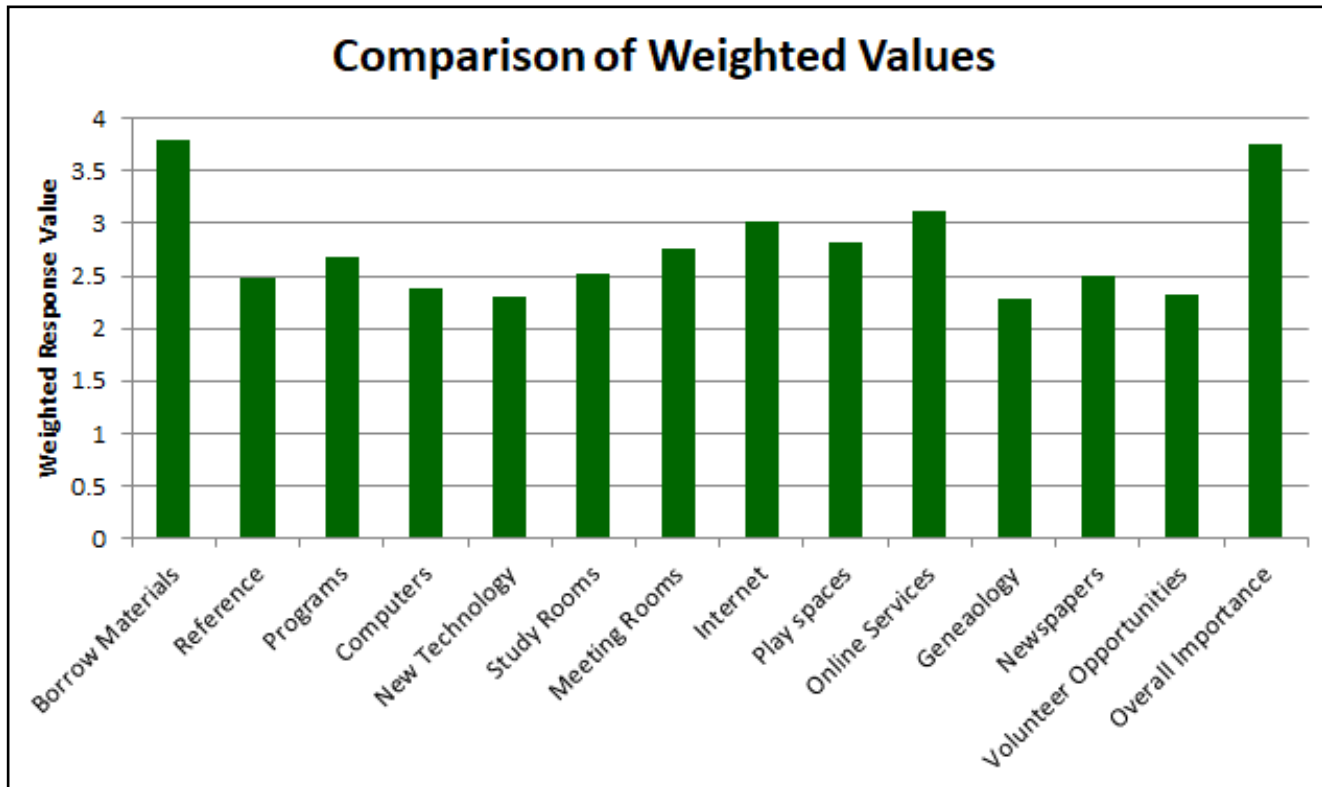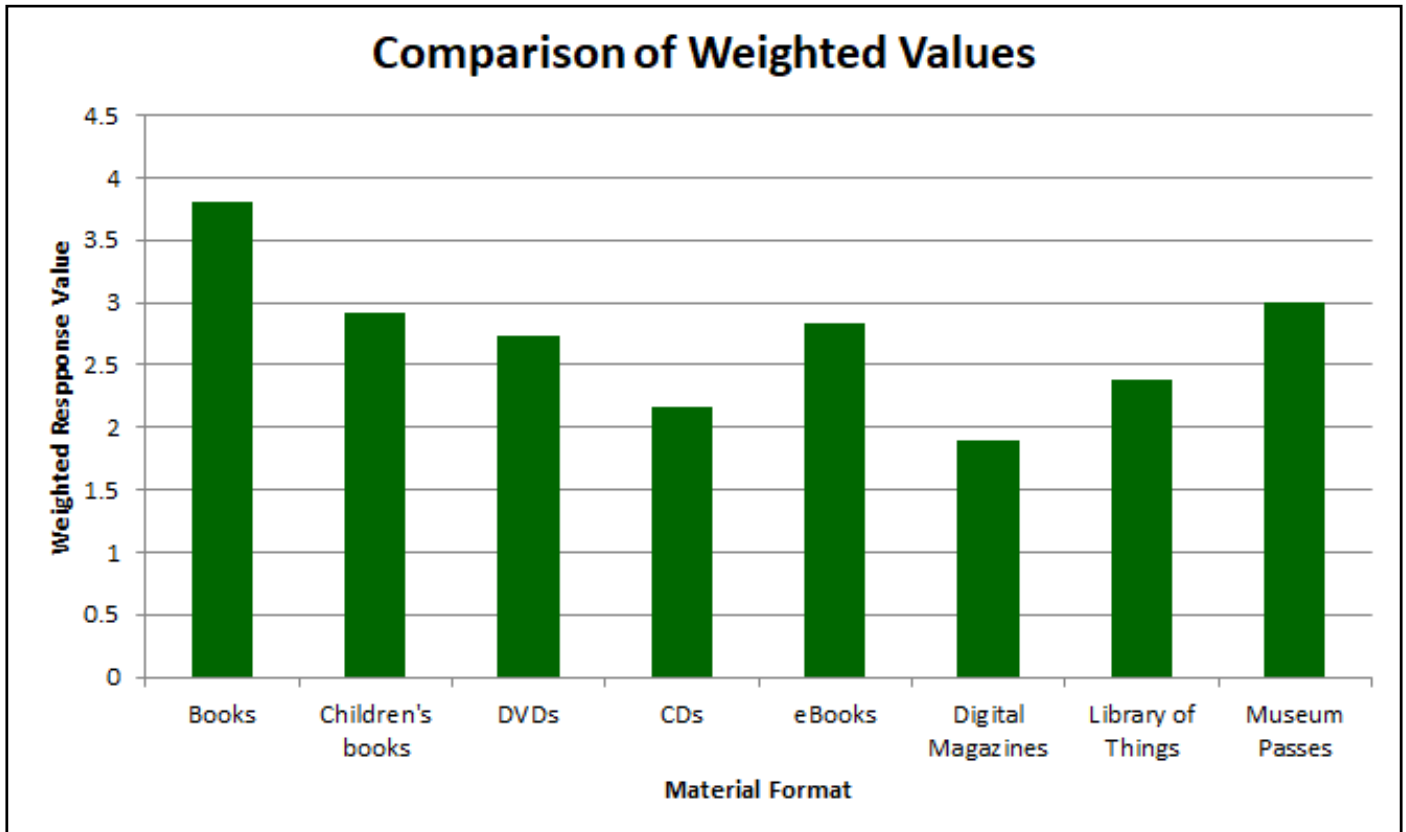**Chart 1: Visitors** Most of those who responded were regular library users.

Frequency of Visits to Library

[Bar chart showing Respondents vs Frequency. Daily: ~20, Weekly: ~227, Monthly: ~128, <1/month: ~45, Never: ~3]

Chart 2: Services When asked to assign a value to the following services, borrowing materials was most frequently cited as very important.

Comparison of Weighted Values

[Bar chart showing Weighted Response Value for: Borrow Materials: ~3.8, Reference: ~2.5, Programs: ~2.68, Computers: ~2.4, New Technology: ~2.3, Study Rooms: ~2.52, Meeting Rooms: ~2.75, Internet: ~3.0, Play spaces: ~2.82, Online Services: ~3.1, Geneaology: ~2.3, Newspapers: ~2.5, Volunteer Opportunities: ~2.33, Overall Importance: ~3.75]

See Page 6: Appendix A for actual data

Chart 3: Materials Survey respondents also rated the importance of library materials by format.

Comparison of Weighted Values

Weighted Response Value

Material Format	Weighted Response Value
Books	3.8
Children's books	2.9
DVDs	2.7
CDs	2.15
eBooks	2.85
Digital Magazines	1.9
Library of Things	2.4
Museum Passes	3.0

See Page 7: Appendix B for actual data

Chart 4: Written comments about what respondents valued most

Of the 425 people who took the survey, 329 (77%) filled in a written response to the question, "What do you value most about the library?"

50% (164 of 329) noted the variety and selection of materials for children and adults.
• This includes physical and e-materials, as well as DVDs, periodicals, video games and CDs.
• Many said that they appreciated the selection was kept current.

26% (87 of the 329) said the library was especially valuable as a gathering space.
• These spaces included study areas, puzzle and activity stations, community rooms, as well as the Children's Place.
• Some noted that the library was just a nice place to "be" when they needed a change of scenery.
• Many called the library an important community center.

19% (62 of 329) singled out staff for being helpful and knowledgeable.
• Many noted that the staff created an overall friendly, welcoming atmosphere.

Also of note:
• 48 of the responses said the programs and events for children and adults provided by the library were fun, entertaining and educational.
• 34 of the responses said the ability to borrow items from other libraries in the system was very helpful/important.
• 33 of responses said the library building was accessible, clean and conveniently located.
• 24 of the responses mentioned access to computers, Wi-Fi and other tech tools as among the most valuable services.
• 23 of the responses said online access to the catalog was important.
• 12 of the responses specifically mentioned the collection of items in the Library of Things.
• 10 of the responses said that library hours were convenient.

Chart 5: Written comments about ways to improve
Of the 425 people who took the survey, 252 filled in a written response to the question, "How could the library or its services be improved?"

25% (64 of 252) said the library was good as is and had no recommendations for improvement.

10% (24 of 252) said they would like to see more quiet areas in the library.
• Some of these responses referred to the noise coming from the Children's Place and during tutoring hours.
• Some suggested carving our quiet zones and enforcing the rules.
• Some thought that additional space was needed for this, others thought it could be done in the existing footprint.

9% (22 of 252) responses wanted to see the library maintain a robust collection of physical materials (fiction, non-fiction, reference or media).

Also of note:
• 16 of the responses said the library needed additional space to adequately provide services.
• 16 of the responses said they would like to see more and varied programming.
• 13 of the responses said there should be more eBooks available and shorter wait times.
• 8 of the responses said the library should continue Sunday hours into the summer.
• 7 of the responses said the library should decrease spending.
• 7 of the responses said they would like to see a café or other food purchasing opportunity.
• 7 of the responses said they would like more children's programs during evening and weekend hours.
• 6 of the responses said they would be interested in technology/orientation programs for seniors.
• 4 of the responses asked for a book drop or library presence in Glenmont.
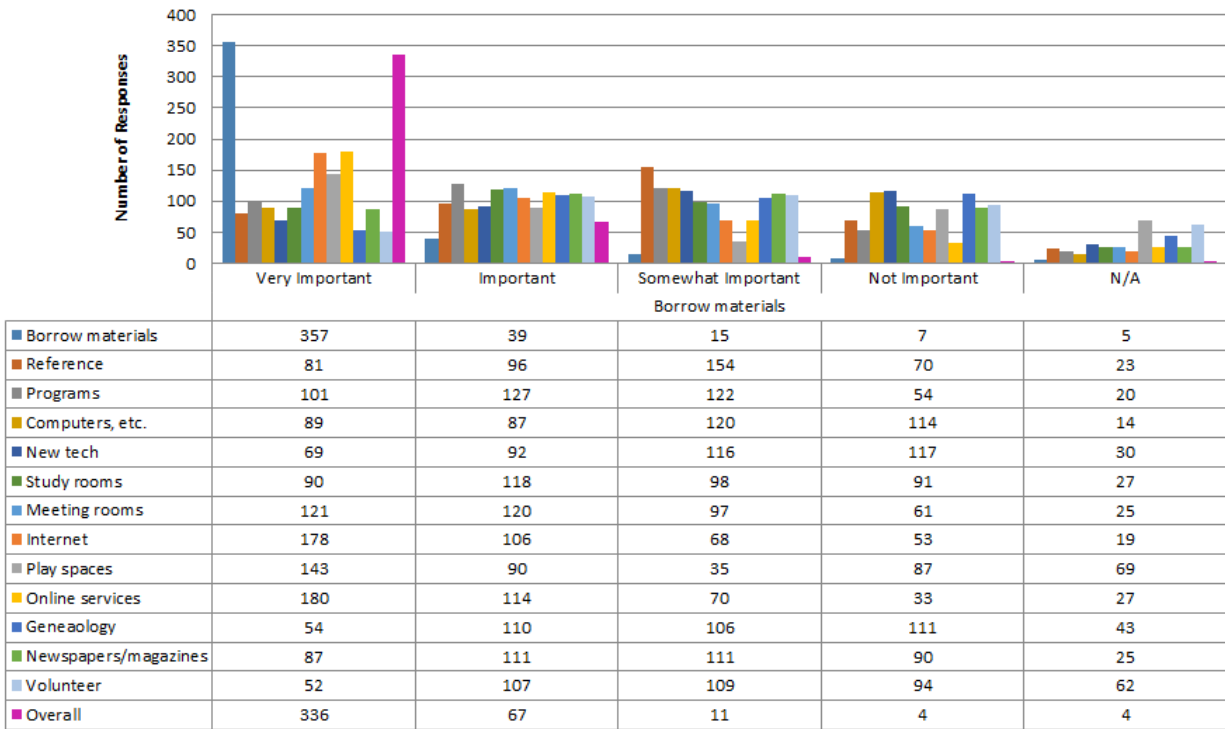
Chart 6: Library space
Of the 425 people who took the survey, 382 answered the question,
"Is the library's current infrastructure able to sufficiently provide services
in a way that meets your needs?"
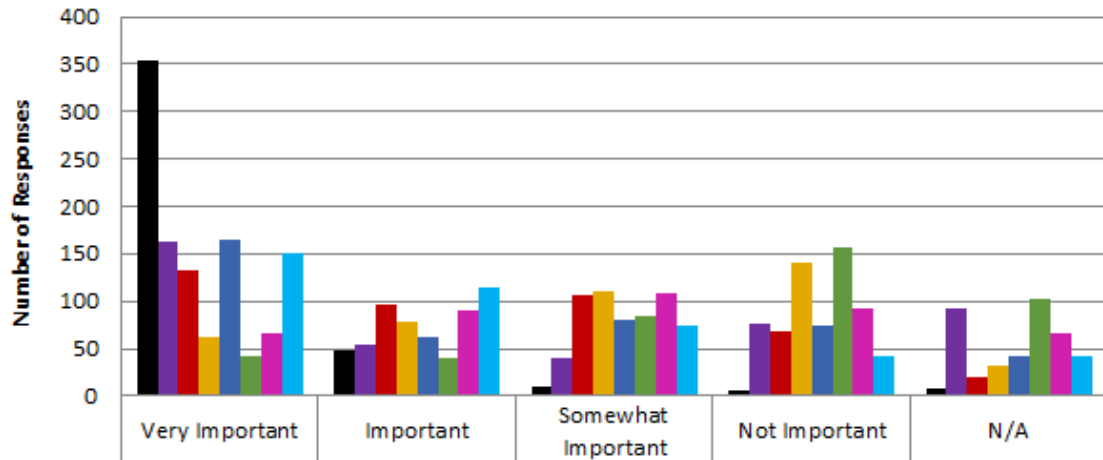
91% (347 of 382) said YES.
9% (35 of 382) said NO.

Appendix A: Library services

How important are these library services to you?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	N/A
Borrow materials	357	39	15	7	5
Reference	81	96	154	70	23
Programs	101	127	122	54	20
Computers, etc.	89	87	120	114	14
New tech	69	92	116	117	30
Study rooms	90	118	98	91	27
Meeting rooms	121	120	97	61	25
Internet	178	106	68	53	19
Play spaces	143	90	35	87	69
Online services	180	114	70	33	27
Geneaology	54	110	106	111	43
Newspapers/magazines	87	111	111	90	25
Volunteer	52	107	109	94	62
Overall	336	67	11	4	4

Appendix B: Borrowing materials

How important are materials by format?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	N/A
■ Books	353	49	9	5	8
■ Children's books	162	54	40	76	92
■ DVDs	132	96	107	69	20
■ CDs	62	78	111	141	32
■ eBooks	165	62	80	74	43
■ Digital Magazines	41	40	84	156	103
■ Library of Things	66	91	108	92	67
■ Museum Passes	151	115	74	41	43