

Committee(s)	Dated:
Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information Community and Children’s Services Committee – For Information	04/09/2017 08/09/2017
Subject: Barbican and Community Libraries Customer Survey	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

In May 2017, two in-depth surveys of the stock and services offered to adults and children by Barbican and Community Libraries were carried out. Responses were received from 2,898 adults and 309 children:

- 99% of Barbican Library adult customers (1,682 respondents) said that overall they were satisfied with Barbican Library (98% in 2014).
- 99% of Shoe Lane Library adult customers (563 respondents) said that overall they were satisfied with Shoe Lane Library (98% in 2014).
- 95% of Artizan Street Library and Community Centre adult customers (269 respondents) said that overall they were satisfied with the library (95% in 2014).

Responses to both surveys and all customer comments have been analysed by the Head of Barbican and Community Libraries and professional staff, a programme of work is being put into place to address concerns and feedback is being given to library customers.

The main area for development identified by the adult survey is to and educate customers in using the e-book, e-audio and e-magazine collections. A renewed programme of work is now in place comprising staff and user training sessions and revised note sheets for compatible e-reading devices. Our library apprentices have been tasked with creating online instructional videos. Loans are showing a steady year-on-year increase. Customers at all sites complained about lack of signage and this is being progressed with colleagues in Built Environment and the Barbican Centre.

Compliments regarding staff and the service accounted for 50% of all the general comments and suggestions received.

Positive responses to the Children’s Library user survey were extremely high, with 100% of customers scoring Barbican, Shoe Lane and Artizan Street Libraries as “Very good” or “Good”. This is a clear endorsement of the work plans currently in place.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City's library service has always regularly surveyed customer opinion to inform service development. In past years, this was carried out using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Public Library Users Survey (PLUS). However, concerns about the PLUS survey costs and the relevance of some of the questions have led many library services to look for alternatives and less than 50% of libraries in England and Wales are still using PLUS.
2. In 2013, a team of professional library staff and the Head of Barbican and Community Libraries was established to create two relevant surveys, one for adult library members and one for children aged 13 years and under. The PLUS questionnaire was used as a base as some of the questions are still highly relevant. The team then looked at what was missing from this survey and created tailored questionnaires using Survey Monkey software. In 2017, a similarly constituted team revisited the surveys and made some amendments and additions.
3. It was decided to direct as many people as possible to taking the surveys online and the Survey Monkey website was widely advertised. However, it was felt that having only online surveys would exclude many customers so paper versions was distributed in libraries over a one-week period.
4. Good use was made of volunteers. At Barbican Library, the adult paper survey was handed out to customers by the Library's volunteer group, The Friends of Barbican Library. In the past, this was done by agency staff. Volunteers also helped staff input the data from the paper surveys into Survey Monkey, which automatically processed the results. In this way, we calculated that the Friends saved the libraries more than £4,000 in staff costs and survey administration fees.
5. Questions covered library stock and services, what the respondents had done in the library that day and how using the City's lending libraries had an impact on other areas of their lives. Equalities and demographic data was also collected and participants were asked to give an overall satisfaction score.

Current Position

Adult Survey results

6. A total of 2,898 surveys were completed: 67% (1,953) of respondents were Barbican Library customers, 22% (640) used Shoe Lane Library and 11% (305) used Artizan Street Library and Community Centre.

At all libraries, the majority of respondents were male (53% at Barbican, 56% Shoe Lane and 52% Artizan Street). In 2014, more women than men responded at Artizan Street (54%). The figures for Barbican and Shoe Lane Libraries were similar to those in 2014.

The age profile of our adult customers across all libraries is:

- 4% aged under 24
- 30% aged 25–44
- 46% aged 45–64
- 15% aged 65–74
- 5% aged over 75.

City workers accounted for the majority of responses at all libraries. This is consistent with membership statistics.

7. Respondents were asked their opinion about library opening hours, external signposting, the attractiveness of the library inside and the standard of customer care received. The following table shows the percentage of respondents scoring the answers “Very good” or “Good”.

	Opening hours		External signposting		Attractiveness of the library inside		Standard of customer care received	
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017
Barbican	86%	86%	68%	70%	87%	89%	96%	95%
Shoe Lane	81%	89%	64%	64%	86%	83%	96%	96%
Artizan Street	91%	80%	56%	57%	87%	71%	94%	89%

The majority of comments received (203 comments) were in favour of better signposting outside and within the Barbican Centre. Signposting to the library is poor and this is being progressed with Built Environment and the Barbican Centre. Signposting in the Shoe Lane area is not as bad, but the entrance to the library is not eye-catching and we are investigating ways of using the ground floor windows to promote the library. Street signposting at Artizan Street was installed following the 2014 survey but customers still complain about not being able to find the library.

At present, there is building work taking place around the library, which has made the situation worse. A trial of “Legible London” signage between Barbican station and the Barbican Centre and the Museum of London is currently being planned. This will include a street-level route via Beech Street and one or two routes at podium level. It is hoped that the signage will be in place by the end of the calendar year. All customer comments pertaining to external signage were passed on to the relevant staff in Built Environment and are being used to inform this work. We are informed that the consultants have been asked to include Barbican Library on the new signage.

Customers at all libraries requested longer opening hours, with opening on Friday afternoons at Barbican Library being the most popular suggestion (176 comments). The decision to close on Friday afternoons was taken some years ago in order to open later on Saturdays. Full consultation with customers was carried out and the current pattern of opening hours proved the most popular option. Associated increased staff costs mean we are unable to increase our opening hours, but we are considering consulting with customers on the current spread of hours. Consultation on a changed pattern of opening hours at Artizan Street is currently under way. Staff are also considering ways to improve the appearance and general ambience of the library space.

8. Staff knowledge, skills and approachability were tested and all three libraries scored very highly.

	Staff knowledge		Staff skills		Staff approachability	
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017
Barbican	97%	98%	97%	97%	97%	95%
Shoe Lane	99%	98%	99%	98%	96%	98%
Artizan Street	96%	93%	97%	93%	92%	92%

We will continue with our current staff training and development programme.

9. We asked customers how satisfied they were with the choice and physical condition of fiction and non-fiction books. In every category, customers gave higher scores than in 2014.

	Fiction				Non-fiction			
	Choice		Condition		Choice		Condition	
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017
Barbican	74%	91%	75%	94%	82%	91%	85%	95%
Shoe Lane	83%	94%	85%	97%	79%	88%	83%	95%
Artizan Street	75%	81%	86%	90%	64%	78%	73%	90%

All librarians have a programme of stock maintenance to complete, including replacing tatty stock and addressing gaps in stock. Space considerations at Artizan Street Library affect the range and volume of stock available, and this was addressed following the 2014 survey. A programme of stock swaps with Shoe Lane Library is now in place to refresh the stock regularly.

10. We asked customers to give their opinion on the graphic novel collections in all libraries. In total, 75% told us that they did not borrow graphic novels. (N.B. This was a new question in 2017.)

	Graphic novels	
	Choice	Condition
	2017	2017
Barbican	90%	95%
Shoe Lane	88%	96%

Artizan Street	82%	89%
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Staff are currently looking at ways to refresh the (fairly small) collections and we are considering a programme of stock swaps.

11. We asked customers to give their opinion on the DVD and CD collections in all libraries. Approximately 50% of customers told us they did not borrow DVDs or CDs.

	DVDs				CDs			
	Choice		Condition		Choice		Condition	
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017	2014	2017
Barbican	93%	91%	82%	93%	93%	93%	93%	91%
Shoe Lane	96%	92%	95%	96%	91%	95%	96%	97%
Artizan Street	91%	80%	93%	89%	87%	80%	84%	88%

Satisfaction among users of the collections is generally high but drops have been recorded at Artizan Street where space is very limited. A programme of stock swaps with Shoe Lane Library is now in place at Artizan Street Library.

12. We asked customers to give their opinion on the talking book collections in all libraries. Approximately 77% of customers told us that they did not borrow talking books. The figure in 2014 was 75%. However, this drop in usage may be accounted for by a rise in the number of survey respondents and the continuous rise in e-audio usage. Of those who do borrow talking books, at Barbican and Shoe Lane Libraries, satisfaction with the choice available and the physical condition of stock is high and we shall continue to buy and maintain stock as normal. Since the last survey, the collection at Artizan Street Library has been removed because it was not well used and to make better use of the space and budget.

	Talking books			
	Choice		Condition	
	2014	2017	2014	2017
Barbican	90%	87%	89%	89%
Shoe Lane	95%	92%	94%	92%

13. We asked customers to give their opinion on the City's e-book and e-audiobook offering. Some 87% of customers told us that they did not borrow e-books, for a variety of reasons. In 2014, the figure was 92%. In total, 92% of respondents told us they did not borrow e-audiobooks (the same figure as in 2014). Respondents could select more than one reason for not borrowing e-books or e-audiobooks.

	e-books		e-audiobooks	
	2014	2017	2014	2017
I'm not interested	42%	48%	60%	63%

I didn't know I could borrow them	21%	27%	17%	22%
I don't own a compatible e-reader	45%	35%	27%	20%
I don't like the selection available	2%	3%	2%	2%

As in 2014, there were two main themes to the comments received from customers: either they have no intention of ever using e-books/e-audiobooks or these are services they intend to use in the future. Some customers commented that they had previously tried the service but found the software difficult to use.

Following the 2014 survey, we heavily marketed the e-book and e-audiobook services and introduced an easy-to-use e-book app. In recent months, the supplier has launched an integrated, very accessible app for e-audiobooks and e-magazines, which allows for both downloading and reading.

We have produced instruction sheets for all compatible e-readers/tablets, along with credit card-sized promotional cards detailing how to get started. Additionally, we hold regular open sessions in libraries to show customers how easy it is to download materials. Library staff have also been fully trained so that they can promote these services confidently. We shall continue with our marketing campaign in particular, publicising the new app. Our two apprentices have been tasked with creating online instruction videos. It is also worth noting that our total e-book and e-audiobook loans have risen year-on-year since 2014, whereas commercial e-book sales have dropped.

14. We asked customers to give their opinion on the e-magazine download service. Some 94% of customers told us they did not borrow e-magazines. (N.B. As this is a relatively new service, it was a new question in 2017.) Respondents could select more than one reason.

	e-magazines
I'm not interested	51%
I didn't know I could borrow them	41%
I don't own a compatible e-reader	14%
I don't like the selection available	1%

We are currently revisiting the marketing plan for the e-magazine service to reach those who are unaware of the service.

15. Customers were asked how using the libraries had helped them with other aspects of their lives. They were given a number of options to consider and could choose more than one. In total, 2,204 people responded to this question.

	2014	2017
Leisure	63%	65%
Study/learning	55%	60%
Health and wellbeing	33%	34%
Skills for life	15%	16%
Your job	13%	17%
Meeting people/socialising	13%	13%
Family and relationships	12%	13%
Developing IT skills	10%	10%
Personal finance/consumer matters	8%	8%
Your retirement	8%	12%
Job seeking	7%	6%
Improving your English	6%	5%
Welfare/benefits	1%	1%

The results were not dissimilar to those collected in 2014, with minor rises in those using the library for leisure, health and wellbeing, skills for life, their job, family and relationships and their retirement and a 5% rise in those using the library for study/learning. The information collected here is particularly helpful for future strategic planning and working with partners to deliver their outcomes, for example, the City's Health and Wellbeing Board and partners in Adult Social Care who have part-funded areas of health stock.

Children's Survey results

16. Most of the survey responses came from Barbican Library (76%), with 16% from Shoe Lane Library and 8% from Artizan Street Library. Of the respondents:

- 53% were girls and 47% boys
- 43% were aged under 5 (88% of Shoe Lane respondents were aged under 5)
- 43% were aged 5–10 and 14% were aged 11–14 (the majority of customers aged 5+ were Barbican Library users)
- 100% thought the library they used was “Good” or “Very good”.

N.B. In 2014, there were too few responses from Artizan Street children to include in the data set.

17. Children were asked to say why they came to the library. They could choose to select more than one reason.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Borrow books or other items	77%	86%	58%	63%	95%
Have fun	68%	45%	85%	79%	47%

Look around (browse)	50%	49%	27%	26%	53%
Read	62%	58%	50%	35%	42%
Attend an event	54%	55%	73%	70%	32%
Meet friends	42%	20%	54%	47%	16%
Do homework	15%	10%	10%	2%	11%
Use the computers	11%	8%	8%	2%	16%
Wait for my family/friends	6%	9%	13%	9%	11%

Answers reflected the age profile of library users, with the Shoe Lane under-fives choosing “Have fun” and “Attend an event” as their most popular reasons for coming to the library. The percentage of Barbican Library customers who selected “Have fun” has dropped significantly but further investigation shows that in 2014 more responses were received from under-fives. This is borne out by responses in paragraph 14 (below). It is encouraging to note that more children say they are coming to the library to borrow books, and children in all libraries like coming to the library.

18. Children rated library staff as being very friendly, helpful and knowledgeable in all libraries.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Friendly	99%	98%	58%	100%	100%
Helpful	100%	100%	85%	100%	100%
Knowledgeable	N/A	98%	N/A	95%	95%

19. We asked the children to tell us why they borrow books and allowed them to select more than one answer.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
I like reading	75%	78%	59%	64%	79%
I want to get better at reading	44%	40%	24%	26%	37%
So somebody else can read them to me	54%	36%	65%	54%	63%
I am in a reading	10%	7%	N/A	N/A	11%

group					
For homework	12%	18%	13%	13%	37%
I want to find something out	33%	34%	24%	8%	32%
So I don't have to buy books	39%	31%	39%	15%	42%
I don't borrow books	2%	6%	13%	5%	0%

The answers we received from children/parents consolidate our knowledge about library use and inform stock purchasing decisions for all libraries.

20. We asked children if they thought the library had a good selection of books.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Yes	100%	95%	100%	95%	100%

The very small numbers of comments received were mainly requests for more titles by certain authors/for specific age groups. We are checking how comprehensive our coverage is in these areas and will take remedial action as necessary.

21. We asked children if they could easily find what they wanted in the library

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Yes	94%	92%	99%	98%	100%

The small number of explanatory comments received were very diverse ranging from "I have to ask for help as I have dyslexia" to "Have sections" e.g. "How to learn words" or "Put them in my age group". Alternative arrangement suggestions are not viable and cause more confusion than the Dewey Decimal System. The key here is staff being more alert to customers' needs and being ready to assist.

22. We asked children about the condition of the library's books.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Clean	92%	80%	100%	98%	94%
A bit scruffy	8%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Very scruffy	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

We have noted a sizeable increase in the number of children who thought the books at Barbican Library were not in a clean condition. This is an area for concern and staff will prioritise stock maintenance work.

23. Overall, 100% of the children in all three libraries rated the books as either “Very good” or “Good”.
24. We asked children about the library computers. In all libraries, children thought the computers were good but most said they did not use them. The most common reasons given for non-use were because they had a computer at home or because they were too young. There is no specific provision for children at Artizan Street or Shoe Lane Libraries but children can use the public computers with supervision. We shall continue to offer a small facility for children at Barbican Children’s Library but these responses give us no reason to consider increasing provision.
25. We asked the children about the homework help available in the libraries. (N.B. Most Shoe Lane respondents skipped this question due to the age profile of its customers.)

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
There are staff to help me	17%	50%	3%	50%	55%
There are books to help me	28%	80%	9%	50%	91%
There are computers to help me	15%	24%	0%	0%	18%
It is somewhere quiet for me to sit and work	26%	42%	12%	25%	36%

In all cases, increases were recorded and, again, we will continue to promote the libraries’ stock and services to children, families and schools.

26. We asked children about other reasons for visiting the libraries. They could select more than one reason.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Take part in an under-fives event	76%	52%	25%	88%	53%
Holiday activity	40%	33%	25%	27%	58%
After-school activity	18%	22%	8%	10%	11%
Book or reading activity	10%	22%	8%	0%	11%
Saturday activity	4%	28%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Again, the most popular answer given was to take part in an under-fives event. The apparent drop in numbers attending under-fives events at Barbican Library is due to a greater number of older children participating in this survey and is not proven by attendance registers, which reflect record

numbers of attendees. Taking part in holiday activities and reading activities are also very popular and Saturday events and activities are popular at Barbican Library. This is an endorsement for the libraries' events programme, which will continue to develop.

27. More than 99% of children/parents agreed that the libraries were friendly and safe places. More than 95% of respondents thought they were easy to get to, bright and cheerful. More than 98% thought they were places with items and activities of interest and more than 87% thought the opening hours were good. Artizan Street's opening hours were reduced as part of our SBR savings package. We consulted with stakeholders and although the majority of people opted for the current opening hours, many young people in particular are keen to see the library closing later in the day. We are currently working to improve the opening hours in consultation with all interested parties.
28. Finally, we asked children in which ways the library helped them.

	Barbican		Shoe Lane		Artizan Street
	2014	2017	2014	2017	2017
Read better	63%	63%	28%	36%	50%
Do better at school	30%	32%	12%	14%	33%
Use computers better	8%	7%	2%	0%	17%
Make friends	41%	32%	78%	67%	33%
Join in and try new activities	55%	52%	78%	74%	50%
Learn and find things out	62%	61%	78%	62%	83%

This information enables us to better understand what our young customers need from our services.

Options

29. Overall, responses received for both surveys endorse the services offered by the lending libraries. Requests for certain types of stock are being considered within the confines of the existing stock budgets. Promotional activity, for example to advertise the digital services, is funded from existing budgets. For services to children and families, this budget includes a grant from the Family and Young People's team within the Department of Community and Children's Services to carry out a range of Children's Centre services in libraries and support early literacy.

Proposals

30. Survey data has been shared with all Barbican and Community Libraries staff. Team leaders and specialists are working on improvement measures where necessary and "You said, we did" feedback to customers is being prepared.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

31. Improvement work is relevant to the following City's key priorities (Corporate Plan 2015-2019):

- To provide modern, efficient and high-quality local services, including policing, within the Square Mile for workers, residents and visitors.
- To provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure, to London and the nation.

It is also relevant to the following Department of Community and Children's Services strategic aims:

Priority Potential:

- People of all ages can achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong learning.

Priority Independence, Involvement and Choice:

- People of all ages can live independently, play a role in their communities and exercise choice over their services.

Priority Community:

- People of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their community.

The "Ambition" of Barbican and Community Libraries is:

To support and promote learning, reading and literacy, facilitate participation in community and cultural life and meet the needs of all our customers – current and potential.

Implications

32. There are no financial, legal, property or HR implications of note and risk is low.

Conclusion

33. A regular survey of customer opinion is essential to the continued relevance of Barbican and Community Libraries. The next major customer survey of adult and children's library services is scheduled for 2020.

Appendices

- None

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