

Library - 1980

Poll shows county residents are avid readers

Results from a telephone survey made last fall indicate Santa Cruz County residents are avid readers who place a high value on libraries.

Anne Turner, director of the library system, presented partial findings of a random, 430-call survey made last November and December with the assistance of Applied Survey Research Inc. The survey was made as part of the library's long-range planning process and is one of three questionnaires. The other two were written; one was mailed to all county residents and the other was a lengthy survey available at branch libraries.

A large majority, 87 percent of 423 people who answered the question, said it is very important that there be library service in Santa Cruz County. Present library services are adequate, said 46.7 percent, and 53 percent would like to see services increased.

Suggestions for new or improved services to patrons included

developing more special book collections (34 percent), provide more community information and referral services (24 percent), expand collection of non-book items, such as records, cassettes or video tapes (23.7 percent) and expand library hours (18.3 percent). These figures represent responses from both the telephone survey and the mail-in questionnaire.

More than half those who answered, 55.7 percent, said they are currently reading a book for leisure or recreation or have read one in the last week. Almost 63 percent, 62.9 percent, read two to five magazines a week. Most people buy their own reading materials—45.4 percent buy books and 81.3 percent buy or subscribe to magazines. Books are checked out of local libraries by 25.7 percent of those who answered but only 3.7 percent of them borrow or use magazines at the library.

The majority of respondents, 88.2 percent, know the location of the

nearest library branch from their home, and 57.1 percent said they use it. The 42.9 percent (182 people) who said they don't use their branch library cite reasons such as they use another branch, their neighborhood library collection is inadequate, hours aren't convenient, it's too far from home, they have physical problems that prevent them from using the branch, there is inadequate parking or no transportation they can use to get to the nearest branch.

When asked if hours at the library the respondent uses are convenient, 63 percent said yes, 14 percent said no and 25 percent said they didn't know, indicating they

weren't sure about hours of operation.

Well over half those who answered, 69.8 percent, said they had used a branch of the library system during the past year and 36.2 percent said they had telephoned a branch.

When asked how often they used the library, 28.4 percent said once a month, 21.9 percent said twice a month, 21.3 percent said twice a year, 15.8 percent said once a year, 10.6 percent said once a week, 1.6 percent said twice a week and .3 percent use the library every day.

"Perhaps," wrote Turner, "the most encouraging conclusion is that we are a community of readers, a community of library users, and

that the level of support for the Library System is very high indeed ... they (questionnaire respondents) overwhelmingly perceive public libraries as very important, and they believe that the information provided by libraries is unique."

Turner pointed out that decisions on library services should include video and computer equipment, since 42 percent of those queried said they own some type of video equipment.

"How many will have it by 1990? Clearly, this is an expanding market, and the library should think carefully about how it allocates future materials budgets

in order to take advantage of the wide availability of this information technology," said Turner in her report.

In addition, she said 21.9 percent of those surveyed own or have access to a home computer. She feels since prices for computers appear to be dropping, the numbers of computer users will increase and the library should consider expanding services in this area.

"We may wish to investigate further the need for establishing some sort of micro-computer center for public use at one of our facilities. Certainly the widespread interest in computers has implications for our book selection policies," she said.