

# Electronic Resources for Library Users: A Survey by the Washington State Library

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Responses Collected 09/27/2010 – 01/13/2011

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Report available: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/quicklinks/EResource-Survey-Users>  
Complete survey: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/quicklinks/EResource-Survey-Users-Complete>

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## Introduction

In approaching a new contract for statewide database licensing in Washington State, we decided to create two surveys, one for staff at libraries of all types throughout Washington, and another for the users of public libraries in Washington. The following results comprise a summary of that second survey for public library users.

The survey was administered by providing a link and image for public libraries to put on their websites. In the interest of user anonymity, we did not collect any information about which users came from which libraries, which means that we cannot parse out data based on library size. This summary aggregates responses and comments from all users that started the survey. 1,209 library users started the survey, with 90.1% (1,089 library users) completing it.

## Analysis

I don't know that there are actually that many surprises in this survey's results. The majority of users visit the library's website a few times a week and use it mainly to find materials and place holds. I'm impressed that over 50% of respondents also use the library website to find articles and do research, which is a good sign for libraries purchasing electronic resources.

Books were a common theme throughout, and while there was some concern that libraries are not focusing enough on books, the real book-related concern was that we're not doing enough to help our users find new books that will interest them. This is a catalog issue, among other things, but implies that we should be doing more in the way of reader's advisory and book lists for our users.

Content is still king when it comes to what our users want to see more of from our libraries. Even though they want DIY help and to learn new skills, what they want most is more books, more movies, and more music, and in every format possible.

In terms of specific subjects that jumped out, genealogists are either our most prevalent users or at least our most vocal. Following genealogy, users were interested in more business, investment, and language-learning resources, by name, and more medical, legal, and current events resources too.

Being that this survey was administered online, it's not surprising that most comments were pro technology and pro e-resources. Even so, that doesn't mean that gadgets and electronics don't have their vocal detractors. Plenty of respondents expressed concern that their library was getting off track and should go back to providing books, and other physical materials, and leave the cutting edge gadgetry out of it. These concerns appear to stem from the idea that technology is expensive to buy, expensive to replace, and becomes obsolete quickly, and that libraries who spend too much on technology are, in turn, buying fewer books.

I hope that this report will be useful to libraries throughout Washington State and beyond, and that it helps provide some insights into our 21<sup>st</sup> century online library users.

- Ahniwa Ferrari, Online Resources Consultant, Washington State Library -- (1/14/2011)

## Page 1: Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this VERY BRIEF survey about electronic resources at your library.

You probably didn't know that the Washington State Library uses federal funds to help your local library purchase online resources. We won't bore you with the details, but your input is invaluable in helping us figure out which resources are important to Washington's library users.

Please note that the questions in this survey refer specifically to resources available through your library web site, e.g. online resources only.

Now, carry on. Completing the survey should take about 5 minutes.

### Electronic Resources for Library Users

[Exit this survey](#)

#### 1. Introduction

1 / 5



20%

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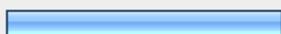
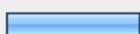
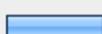
Now, carry on. Completing the survey should take about 5 minutes.

Next

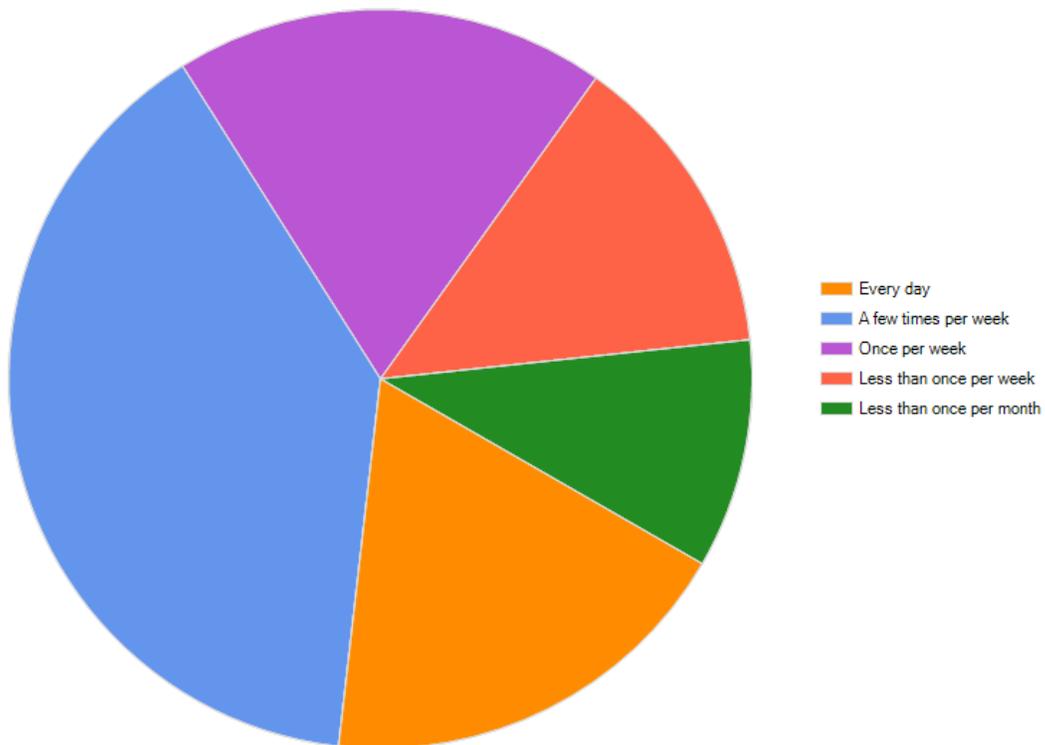
## Page 2: About You

Just some quick info about how, and how much, you use your library's online resources.

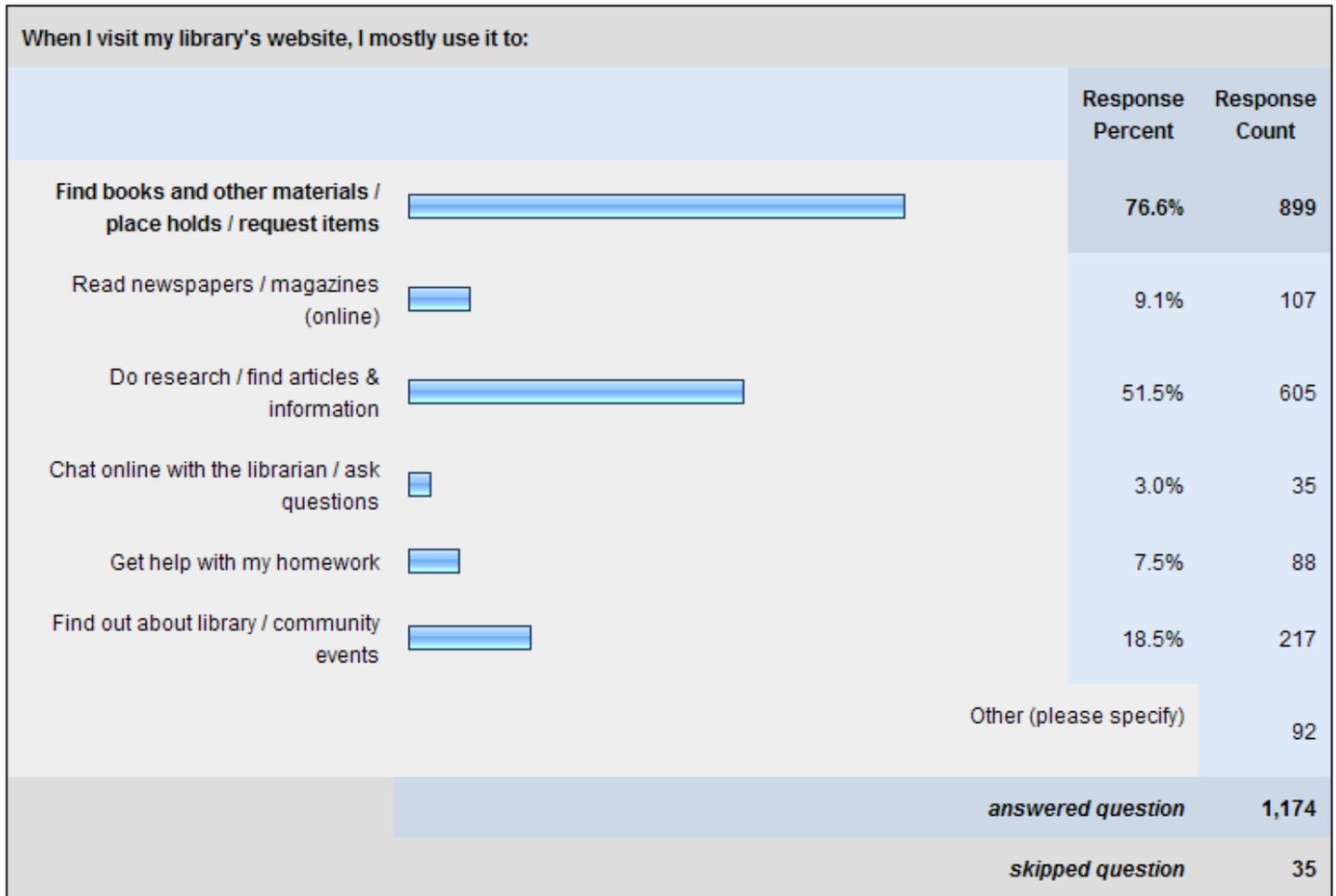
### Question 1: On average, I visit my library's website (select one):

On average, I visit my library's website (select one):		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Every day 	18.5%	221
A few times per week 	39.3%	470
Once per week 	18.8%	225
Less than once per week 	13.5%	161
Less than once per month 	10.0%	120
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>1,197</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>12</b>

On average, I visit my library's website (select one):



## Question 2: When I visit my library's website, I mostly use it to:



### Representative Comments from “Other (please specify)”:

- Check email / overdues / new materials
- Downloadable Audiobooks / ebooks / music
- Genealogy
- Homework help
- Job search help
- Renew materials
- Use databases / research / homework / language resources

## Page 3: In General

### Question 3: How important is it that your library provides online resources to help you:

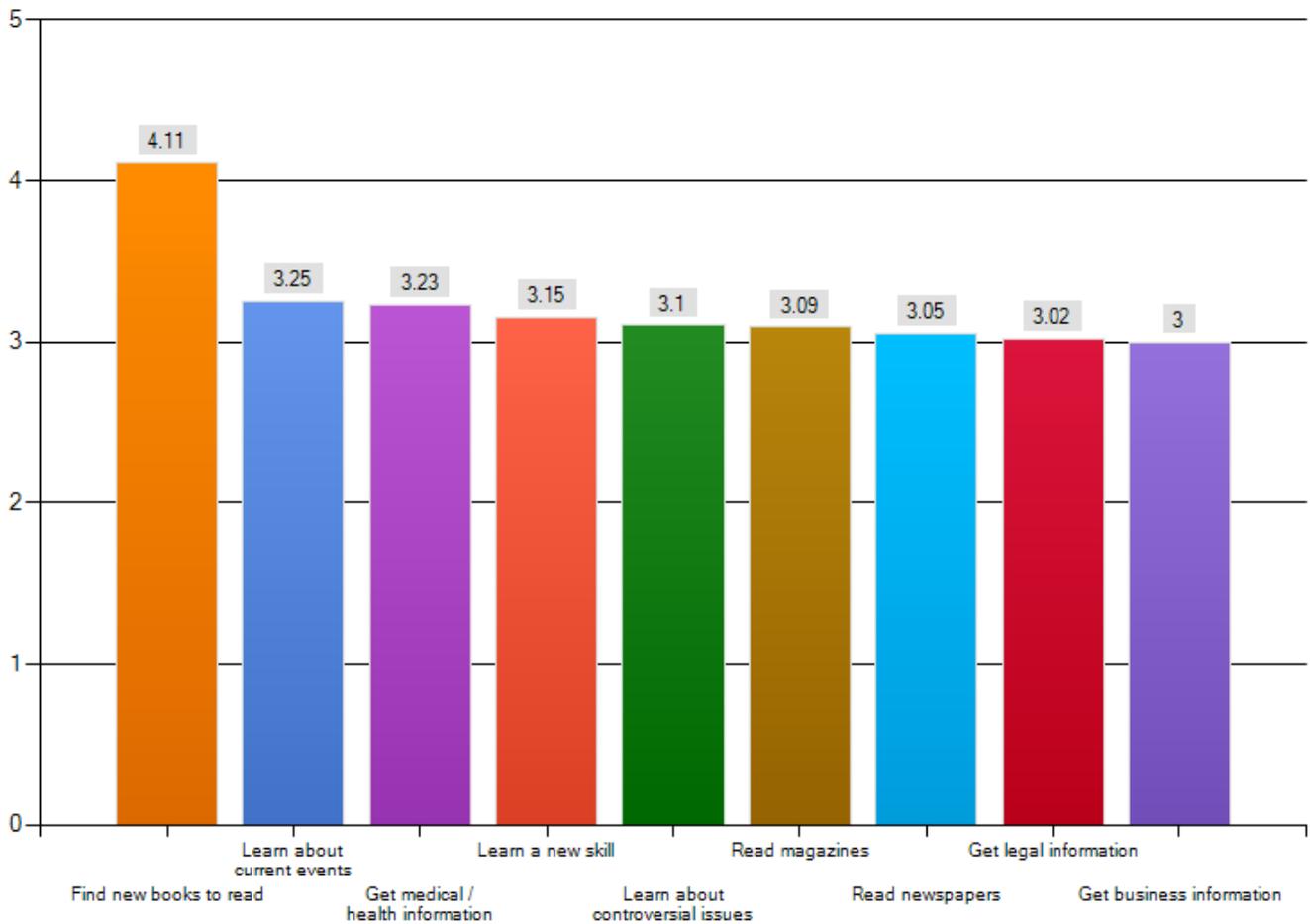
How important is it that your library provides online resources to help you:							
	Not important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	No Opinion / Not Sure (3)	Important (4)	Very important (5)	Rating Average	Response Count
Learn a new language	27.2% (277)	14.2% (144)	18.9% (192)	24.2% (246)	15.5% (158)	2.87	1,017
Learn a new skill	19.7% (202)	14.2% (145)	16.5% (169)	30.5% (312)	19.1% (196)	3.15	1,024
Read newspapers	22.1% (220)	15.3% (152)	15.9% (158)	28.7% (286)	18.0% (179)	3.05	995
Read magazines	20.1% (208)	17.1% (177)	15.2% (157)	29.0% (300)	18.6% (193)	3.09	1,035
Do genealogical research	29.1% (308)	15.9% (168)	17.2% (182)	15.1% (160)	22.7% (240)	2.86	1,058
Do homework	34.2% (349)	8.3% (85)	11.9% (121)	21.0% (214)	24.7% (252)	2.94	1,021
Find new books to read	5.8% (62)	8.7% (93)	7.0% (75)	25.6% (274)	52.9% (566)	4.11	1,070
Get a job	31.5% (323)	11.9% (122)	16.9% (173)	21.7% (223)	18.0% (185)	2.83	1,026
Learn about controversial issues	21.7% (222)	13.8% (141)	16.4% (168)	29.2% (298)	18.9% (193)	3.10	1,022
Get legal information	21.7% (224)	15.9% (164)	17.9% (184)	27.7% (285)	16.8% (173)	3.02	1,030
Get medical / health information	18.1% (187)	13.7% (141)	15.1% (156)	32.9% (340)	20.2% (208)	3.23	1,032
Get business information	23.9% (246)	13.7% (141)	18.4% (190)	26.4% (272)	17.7% (182)	3.00	1,031
Learn about current events	18.9% (195)	12.2% (126)	15.6% (161)	31.4% (323)	21.8% (225)	3.25	1,030
Fix your car / truck	46.3% (469)	10.9% (110)	19.4% (197)	15.9% (161)	7.5% (76)	2.27	1,013
					Anything we missed?		171
						<b>answered question</b>	<b>1,114</b>
						<b>skipped question</b>	<b>95</b>

#### Representative Comments from “Anything we missed?”:

- Audiobooks / ebooks
- Consumer information / product reviews
- Download books / movies / Audiobooks
- Find materials / new materials / information
- Homework / home schooling resources
- Historical newspapers
- Music and movies
- Research issues / products / subjects

Question 3 (Column Chart - These top 9 choices had a weighted value of 3 or greater):

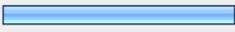
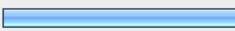
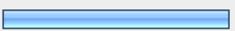
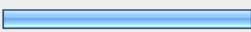
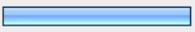
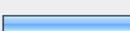
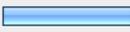
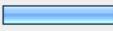
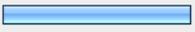
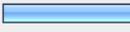
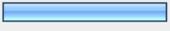
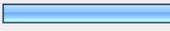
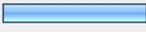
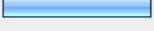
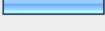
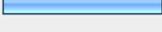
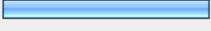
How important is it that your library provides online resources to help you:



[on following page]

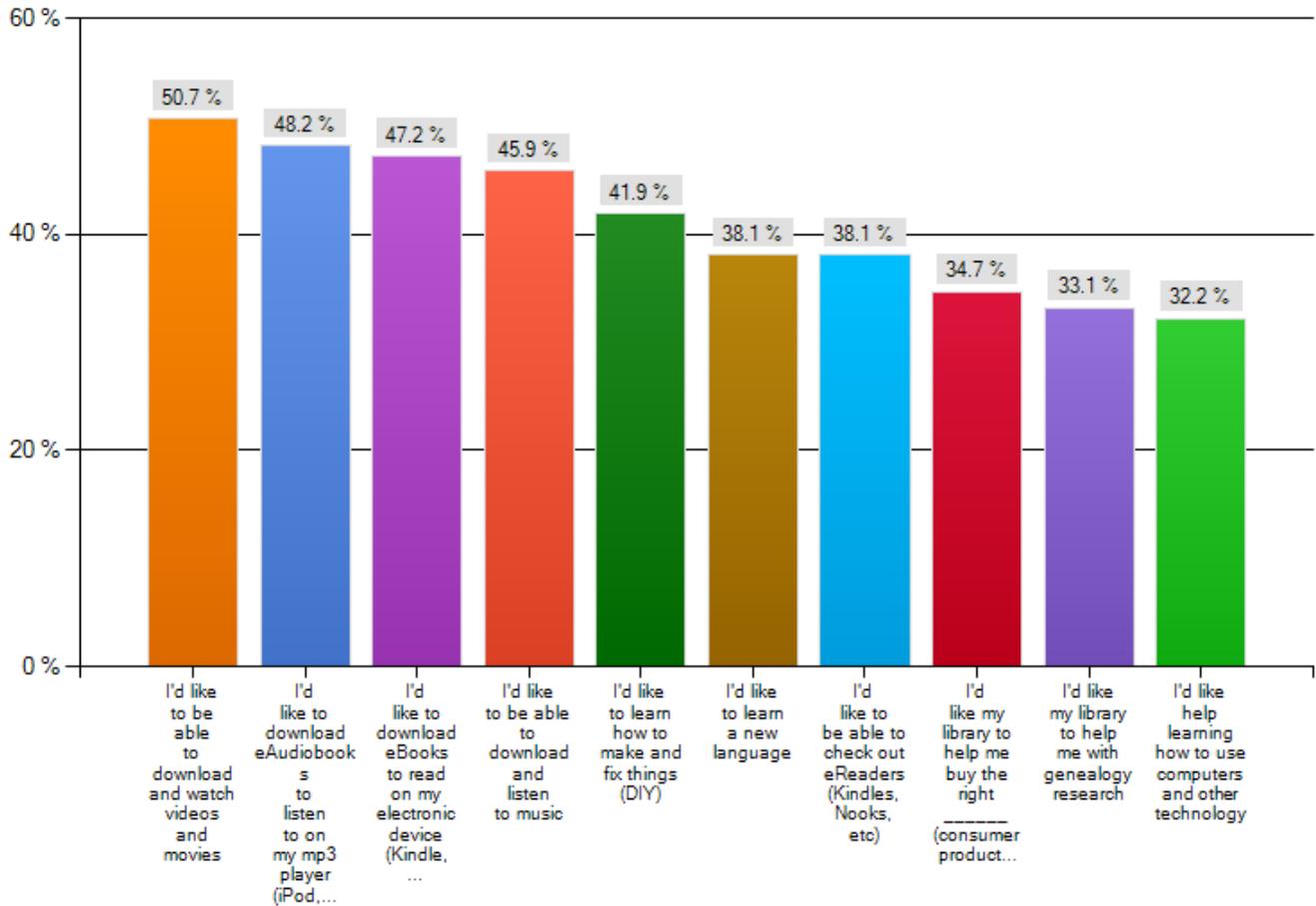
Page 4: What else?

Question 4: Libraries offer more than just information. What else would you really like your library to offer?

Libraries offer more than just information. What else would you really like your library to offer. Check all that apply.			Response Percent	Response Count
I'd like to download eBooks to read on my electronic device (Kindle, Nook, etc)		47.2%	490	
I'd like to download eAudiobooks to listen to on my mp3 player (iPod, Zune, etc)		48.2%	500	
I'd like to be able to download and listen to music		45.9%	476	
<b>I'd like to be able to download and watch videos and movies</b>		<b>50.7%</b>	<b>526</b>	
I'd like to learn a new language		38.1%	395	
I'd like to ask my library questions via text message (SMS)		17.6%	183	
I'd like my library to offer a mobile app for my smart phone (iPhone / Android)		26.0%	270	
I'd like to be able to place and check holds on my cell phone		26.2%	272	
I'd like to be able to check out laptops		22.7%	236	
I'd like to be able to check out eReaders (Kindles, Nooks, etc)		38.1%	395	
I'd like to be able to check out mp3 players (iPods, etc)		16.5%	171	
I'd like my library to help with my homework		26.5%	275	
I'd like my library to help me with genealogy research		33.1%	344	
I'd like my library to help me buy the right _____ (consumer product reviews)		34.7%	360	
I'd like help with my resume		29.2%	303	
I'd like help getting a job		29.9%	310	
I'd like to learn how to play an instrument		20.4%	212	
I'd like help learning how to use computers and other technology		32.2%	334	
I'd like help learning how to use the internet		16.3%	169	
I'd like my library to be on Facebook		17.8%	185	
I'd like my library to be on Twitter		6.2%	64	
I'd like my library to be on MySpace		3.1%	32	
I'd like to learn how to make and fix things (DIY)		41.9%	435	
Other (please specify)			103	
<b>answered question</b>			<b>1,038</b>	
<b>skipped question</b>			<b>171</b>	

Question 4 (Column Chart - These top 10 choices were chosen by 30% or more of respondents):

**Libraries offer more than just information. What else would you really like your library to offer.  
Check all that apply.**



Representative Comments from “Other (please specify)”:

- Archived newspapers
- Bibliographies
- Grant research and resources
- Hobby and craft classes
- More books / more events / more resources
- More hours at all branches / branches closer to me
- More resources to help me learn X
- More downloadable content / ebooks / eaudiobooks

## Page 5: Your Voice Here

This is the last page, you're almost done! Just some open-ended questions so that you can say what you want to say.

### Question 5: The best resource that my library offers through its website is (825 responses):

[listed is a summary representative of trends in the comments provided for this open-ended question]

- 24x7 chat / reference / access to librarians
- Ability to find books and place holds online / online catalog
- Access to a wide variety of information, databases, and books
- Business databases / resources
- Genealogy databases and historical newspapers / ancestry.com
- Access to Audiobooks and ebooks
- Book lists / book 24x7 / catalog
- Consumer Reports
- Databases
- Downloadable Audiobooks, ebooks, music
- Factiva
- Homework help
- Heritage Quest
- Language learning software / services
- Information
- Interlibrary loans
- Magazines and newspapers / newspaper archives
- Online catalog
- Placing holds
- ProQuest
- Research databases / materials / sites
- Reserving books
- Search and locate books / music / other materials
- Value Line / Morningstar / investment information

**Question 6: I really wish that my library offered through its website: (550 responses):**

[listed is a summary representative of trends in the comments provided for this open-ended question]

- Movie / video downloads, music downloads, ebook / eaudiobook downloads
- Better searching / browsing / listing of materials
- Recommendations / related works, find more like this
- Consumer reports
- A better catalog
- A mobile app
- Checkout history
- Access to more / other databases
- Ancestry.com / Ancestry.com from home
- More newspaper / magazine coverage, better archived coverage
- Online reference, chat, 24x7 reference
- Better design / usability / functionality of website & catalog
- Books in X format
- Consumer reports
- Downloadable books / music / movies / Audiobooks / other content
- Ebooks for X device / format
- Access to Footnote.com
- Homework help
- Language-learning resources / databases / tutorials
- More books / more databases / more downloadable content
- More genealogy resources
- More movies and music, music downloads
- Online classes / gambling / movies / newspapers / excerpts
- Rosetta Stone

### Question 7: Additional comments (380 responses):

[listed is a summary representative of trends in the comments provided for this open-ended question]

- Would like a better catalog / more interactivity / faster access.
- Access to databases is important! Online services are a must!
- Library staff are wonderful!
- Would like better hours.
- Make the website more user friendly.
- Don't like the new system.
- Needs an app for iPhone / Android.
- I am so thankful / happy / impressed with the library!
- Electronics are not a good use of library funds.
- I like the improvements being made / I like that my library keeps up with current trends.
- I love my library!
- The library website needs improvement / is not as good as X library's website.
- I miss having librarians in libraries.
- More money for libraries!
- I want everything to be available digitally.
- I wish more money would be spent on books instead of computers.
- I wish more money would be spent on computers instead of books.
- Keep libraries quiet.
- Libraries are among the greatest (maybe the greatest) institutions of civilization.
- The old catalog was better.
- Quit trying to be cutting edge.
- Spend more money on materials and less on programs / classes.
- Thank you!
- The new system / catalog / database is slow / difficult / hard to use.
- You are doing a great job!

## Appendix A: Appearance of Survey to Respondents

### Electronic Resources for Library Users

[Exit this survey](#)

#### 1. Introduction

1 / 5



20%

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You probably didn't know that the Washington State Library uses federal funds to help your local library purchase online resources. We won't bore you with the details, but your input is invaluable in helping us figure out which resources are important to Washington's library users.

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Now, carry on. Completing the survey should take about 5 minutes.

Next

## 2. About You

2 / 5

40%

Just some quick info about how, and how much, you use your library's online resources.

### 1. On average, I visit my library's website (select one):

- Every day
- A few times per week
- Once per week
- Less than once per week
- Less than once per month

### 2. When I visit my library's website, I mostly use it to:

- Find books and other materials / place holds / request items
- Get help with my homework
- Read newspapers / magazines (online)
- Chat online with the librarian / ask questions
- Do research / find articles & information
- Find out about library / community events

Other (please specify)

Prev

Next

## 3. In General



### 3. How important is it that your library provides online resources to help you:

	Not important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	No Opinion / Not Sure (3)	Important (4)	Very important (5)
Do genealogical research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do homework	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Find new books to read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fix your car / truck	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get business information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get legal information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get medical / health information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn a new language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn a new skill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn about controversial issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learn about current events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read newspapers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Anything we missed?

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Next

## 4. What else?

4 / 5

80%

**4. Libraries offer more than just information. What else would you really like your library to offer.****Check all that apply.**

- I'd like to be able to check out laptops
- I'd like to download eAudiobooks to listen to on my mp3 player (iPod, Zune, etc)
- I'd like to be able to place and check holds on my cell phone
- I'd like help getting a job
- I'd like my library to be on MySpace
- I'd like my library to be on Twitter
- I'd like my library to be on Facebook
- I'd like help with my resume
- I'd like to be able to download and watch videos and movies
- I'd like to learn how to make and fix things (DIY)
- I'd like to be able to check out mp3 players (iPods, etc)
- I'd like to be able to download and listen to music
- I'd like my library to help with my homework
- I'd like to learn how to play an instrument
- I'd like my library to offer a mobile app for my smart phone (iPhone / Android)
- I'd like help learning how to use the internet
- I'd like to ask my library questions via text message (SMS)
- I'd like my library to help me buy the right \_\_\_\_\_ (consumer product reviews)
- I'd like my library to help me with genealogy research
- I'd like help learning how to use computers and other technology
- I'd like to be able to check out eReaders (Kindles, Nooks, etc)
- I'd like to download eBooks to read on my electronic device (Kindle, Nook, etc)
- I'd like to learn a new language

Other (please specify)

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## 5. Your Voice Here

5 / 5

100%

This is the last page, you're almost done! Just some open-ended questions so that you can say what you want to say.

**5. The best resource that my library offers through its website is:**

**6. I really wish that my library offered through its website:**

**7. Additional comments:**

Prev

Done