All Together Now -- The Library as Civic Bridge and Community Learning Hub
Michigan Summer Reading Virtual Symposium

Tracie D. Hall, Executive Director
American Library Association
Ideas

- Libraries as Places of Belonging (Civic Bridge)
- Libraries as Educational Spaces (Learning Hub)
- The Third Great Wave of Library Services
- The Fight Against Information Poverty
- A New Call to Action
Places of Belonging and Being Together

BOWLING ALONE
The Collapse and Revival of American Community
ROBERT D. PUTNAM
With a New Preface and Afterword by the Author
Reading Encourages Inquiry and Makes it a Habit

Reading Takes Many Forms
Who reads?  
Who doesn’t?

Who doesn’t read books in America?  
BY RISA GELGES-WATNIK AND ANDREW PERRIN

Roughly a quarter of American adults (23%) say they haven’t read a book in whole or in part in the past year, whether in print, electronic or audio form, according to a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021. Who are these non-book readers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% of U.S. adults who haven’t read a book in past 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. adults</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ages 18-49</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $30K</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>$30K-$74,999</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>$75K or more</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS or less</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>College+</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.  
PEW RESEARCH CENTER
A Timely Pledge

The American Library’s Twelve Core Values

- Access
- Confidentiality/Privacy
- Democracy
- Diversity
- Education/Lifelong Learning
- Intellectual Freedom

- Sustainability
- The Public Good
- Preservation
- Professionalism
- Service
- Social Responsibility
Some Don’t Read

Some Can’t Read

We must serve both
Reading and Literacy have Multigenerational Impacts

“Adults with low literacy skills are left out of the critical communication chain that describes those health protections, which is more than simply unfortunate. It is part of a structured social injustice that we can address by improving the health and well-being of vulnerable populations.”

Literacy is a multigenerational issue. Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading level.
At least 21% of adults in the United States (about 43 million) are considered functionally illiterate category -- National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).

More than one-third of workers in some sectors have few or no digital skills. This includes construction, retail, wholesale, and auto repair, where 37% of workers have limited or no digital skills; hospitality (36%); manufacturing (35%); and administrative and support services (35%).

At least 10% of Americans don’t use the internet. Why, and who are they?

This necessitates a focus, not just on information access on information application.
The Same Disinvestment that produces this also produces this.
Blacks and Latinos are 10 years behind Whites in levels of broadband access and almost 4 times more Blacks have poor Tech connectivity than Whites.

Poor access to connectivity and work-from-home jobs caused minorities little choice but to venture out of home. Black people left their homes 135% more than White people during the lockdown peak in April.

A Deutsche Bank study reports on digital resource gaps that those working in libraries and information services have long noted. More than half of Blacks and Latinos could be under-prepared for 86% of jobs by 2045.

If this digital racial gap is not addressed, in one generation alone, digitization could render the country's minorities into an unemployment abyss.
What is Information Poverty?

• “Information Poverty’ has been described as a “situation in which individuals and communities, within a given context, do not have the requisite skills, abilities or material means to obtain efficient access to information, interpret it and apply it appropriately.”

-- Johannes Britz

• Information poverty is further defined by the lack of visible access points to critical information and the absence of well-coordinated and appropriately scaled information infrastructure.

• Poverty is compounded when people do not have access to one of three things: financial capital, education, or connections to information or social networks.
Others are being denied the right to read about themselves and others
ALA Launched 1\textsuperscript{st} National Anti-Censorship Campaign: \textcolor{red}{UniteAgainstBookBans.org}
If the first great wave of library and information services was in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} through early 20\textsuperscript{th} century to pull the public towards reading literacy, and the second wave in the latter 20\textsuperscript{th} century to help to introduce technological literacy into the populace, then the next and third great wave of library and information science will be to “exteriorize” library and information services and close the digital literacy and data access gap.
The Community Library is literally at the Crossroads of Multiple Literacies

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
Creativity and Innovation
Communication and Collaboration
Visual Literacy
Scientific and Numerical Literacy
**Cross-Disciplinary Thinking**
Basic Literacy
Media Literacy
Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) Literacy
**Life and Career Skills**
Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
Recreational Literacy
**Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy**
Civic Literacy
Health Literacy
Environmental Literacy
Connecting Spaces for Youth and Young Adults
Connecting Spaces for Older Adults and those who are Marginalized
Some believe that libraries can play a role that no other institution in the public realm can.

What hits home?

- Despite real and perceived barriers to service, researchers and practitioners have shown evidence that racial and ethnic minorities tend to rely more heavily on libraries critical information needs.

- Understanding that for some individuals from underserved communities, libraries are reminiscent of exclusive, judgment-making institutions such as schools. And for some school is the site of the wound.

- Claude Steele observes that what can also impact interactions between diverse groups and librarians is "the specter of stigma and racial vulnerability." Steele offers that for some asking for help means "being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group".

- We must pay attention to what Mary Rowe calls “micro-inequities” (subtle differences in tone, gesture, attitude, manner) that come into play—sometimes subconsciously when we interact with those we perceive as different or “other.”

- Some of the most meaningful and timely information services take place beyond the reference desk and outside the library.
It is an almost universal finding in studies investigating human information behaviour that people choose other people as their preferred source of information.

--Catherine Johnson
What can we learn from retail or banking?
While we are asking questions...

Think of a reading service, resource, or experience your library is consistently being asked to provide that it currently doesn’t. How are you responding?

Now, think of a blatantly non-library reading service, resource, or experience your library is constantly being asked to take on or is taking on by default. How are you responding?
Thank You!
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