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Younger Americans and Public Libraries

How those under 30 engage with libraries and think about libraries' role in their lives and communities

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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Summary of Findings

Younger Americans—those ages 16-29—especially fascinate researchers and organizations because of their advanced technology habits, their racial and ethnic diversity, their looser relationships to institutions such as political parties and organized religion, and the ways in which their social attitudes differ from their elders.

This report pulls together several years of research into the role of libraries in the lives of Americans and their communities with a special focus on Millennials, a key stakeholder group affecting the future of communities, libraries, book publishers and media makers of all kinds, as well as the tone of the broader culture.

Following are some of the noteworthy insights from this research.

There are actually three different “generations” of younger Americans with distinct book reading habits, library usage patterns, and attitudes about libraries.

One “generation” is comprised of high schoolers (ages 16-17); another is college-aged (18-24), though many do not attend college; and a third generation is 25-29.

Millennials’ lives are full of technology, but they are more likely than their elders to say that important information is not available on the internet. Some 98% of those under 30 use the internet, and 90% of those internet users say they using social networking sites. Over three-quarters (77%) of younger Americans have a smartphone, and many also have a tablet (38%) or e-reader (24%). Despite their embrace of technology, 62% of Americans under age 30 agree there is “a lot of useful, important information that is not available on the internet,” compared with 53% of older Americans who believe that. At the same time, 79% of Millennials believe that people without internet access are at a real disadvantage.

Millennials are quite similar to their elders when it comes to the amount of book reading they do, but young adults are more likely to have read a book in the past 12 months. Some 43% report reading a book—in any format—on a daily basis, a rate similar to older adults. Overall, 88% of Americans under 30 read a book in the past year, compared with 79% of those age 30 and older. Young adults have caught up to those in their thirties and forties in e-reading, with 37% of adults ages 18-29 reporting that they have read an e-book in the past year.

The community and general media-use activities of younger adults are different from older adults. Those under age 30 are more likely to attend sporting events or concerts than older adults. They are also more likely to listen to music, the radio, or a podcast in some

format on a daily or near-daily basis, and socialize with friends or family daily. Older adults, in turn, are more likely to visit museums or galleries, watch television or movies, or read the news on a daily basis.

As a group, Millennials are as likely as older adults to have used a library in the past 12 months, and more likely to have used a library website. Among those ages 16-29, 50% reported having used a library or bookmobile in the course of the past year in a September 2013 survey. Some 47% of those 30 and older had done so. Some 36% of younger Americans used a library website in that time frame, compared with 28% of those 30 and older. Despite their relatively high use of libraries, younger Americans are among the least likely to say that libraries are important. Some 19% of those under 30 say their library's closing would have a major impact on them and their family, compared with 32% of older adults, and 51% of younger Americans say it would have a major impact on their community, compared with 67% of those 30 and older.

As with the general population, most younger Americans know where their local library is, but many say they are unfamiliar with all the services it may offer: 36% of Millennials say they know little or nothing about the local library's services, compared with 29% of those 30 and older. At the same time, most younger Americans feel they can easily navigate their local library, and the vast majority would describe libraries as warm, welcoming places, though younger patrons are less likely to rate libraries' physical conditions highly.

While previous reports from Pew Research have focused on younger Americans' [e-reading habits](#) and [library usage](#), this report will explore in their attitudes towards public libraries in greater detail, as well as the extent to which they value libraries' roles in their communities. To better understand the context of younger Americans' [engagement with libraries](#), this report will also explore their broader attitudes about technology and the role of libraries in the digital age.

It is important to note that age is not the only factor in Americans' engagement with public libraries, nor the most important. Our [library engagement typology found](#) that Americans' relationships with public libraries are part of their broader information and social landscapes, as people who have extensive economic, social, technological, and cultural resources are also more likely to use and value libraries as part of those networks. Deeper connections with public libraries are also often associated with key life moments such as having a child, seeking a job, being a student, and going through a situation in which research and data can help inform a decision. As a result, the picture of younger Americans' engagement with public libraries is complex and sometimes contradictory, as we examine their habits and attitudes at different life stages.

Even among those under 30, age groups differ in habits and attitudes

Though there are often many differences between Americans under 30 and older adults, younger age groups often have many differences that tie to their age and stage of adulthood.

Our surveys have found that **older teens (ages 16-17)** are more likely to [read \(particularly print books\)](#), more likely to [read for work or school](#), and more likely to [use the library for books and research](#) than older age groups. They are the only age group more likely to borrow most of the books they read instead of purchasing them, and are also [more likely to get reading recommendations at the library](#). Yet despite their closer relationship with public libraries, 16-17 year-olds are less likely to say they highly value public libraries, both as a personal and community resource. Older adults, by contrast, are more likely to place a high level of importance on libraries' roles in their communities—even age groups that are less likely to use libraries overall, such as those ages 65 and older.

The members of the next oldest age group, **college-aged adults (ages 18-24)**, are less likely to use public libraries than many other age groups, and are significantly less likely to have visited a library recently than in our previous survey: Some 56% of 18-24 year-olds said they had visited a library in the past year in November 2012, while just 46% said this in September 2013. They are more likely to purchase most of the books they read than borrow them, and are more likely to read the news regularly than 16-17 year-olds. In addition, like the next oldest age group, 25-29 year-olds, most of those in the college-aged cohort have lived in their current neighborhood five years or less.

Finally, many of the library habits and views of **adults in their late twenties (ages 25-29)** are often more similar to members of older age groups than their younger counterparts. They are less likely than college-aged adults to have read a book in the past year, but are more likely to keep up with the news. In addition, a large proportion (42%) are parents, a group with [particularly high rates](#) of library usage. Additionally, library users in this group are less likely than younger patrons to say their library use has decreased, and they are much more likely to say that various library services are very important to them and their family.

Younger Americans' community activities, and media and technology landscapes

As a group, the library usage of younger Americans ages 16-29 fits into the larger context of their social activities and community engagement, as well as their broader media and technological environment. Those under age 30 are more likely to attend sporting events or concerts than older adults. They are also more likely to listen to music, the radio, or a podcast in some format on a daily or near-daily basis, and socialize with friends or family daily. Older adults, in turn, are more likely to visit museums or galleries, watch television or movies, or read the news on a daily basis.

About four in ten younger Americans (43%) reported reading a book—in any format—on a daily basis, a rate similar to older adults. Overall, 88% of Americans under 30 read a book in the past year, making them more likely to do so than older adults. Among younger Americans who did read at least one book, the median or typical number read in the past year was 10.

Younger Americans typically have higher rates of technology adoption than older adults, with 98% of those under 30 using the internet, and 90% of those internet users saying they using social networking sites. Over three-quarters (77%) of younger Americans have a smartphone, and many also have a tablet (38%) or e-reader (24%).

Respondents of all age groups generally agree that the internet makes it much easier to find information today than in the past, and most Americans feel that it's easy to separate the good information from bad online. However, Americans under age 30 are actually a little more likely than older adults to say that there is a lot of useful, important information that is *not* available on the internet. They are also somewhat more likely to agree that people without internet access are at a real disadvantage because of all the information they might be missing.

Relationships with public libraries

Younger Americans are significantly more likely than older adults to have used a library in the past year, including using a library website. Overall, the percentage of all Americans who visited a library in person in the previous year fell from our 2012 to 2013 surveys, but the percentage who used a library website increased; the same is true for younger Americans. Few library users made use of a library website without also visiting a library in person in that time, however, so overall library usage rates did not increase:

- Among those ages 16-29, the percentage who visited a public library in person in the previous year dropped from 58% in November 2012 to 50% in September 2013, with the largest drop occurring among 18-24 year-olds.
- 36% of younger Americans used a library website in the previous year, up from 28% in 2012, with the largest growth occurring among 16-17 year-olds (from 23% to 35%).

Despite their higher rates of library usage overall, younger Americans—particularly those under age 25—continue to be less likely than older adults to say that if their local public library closed it would have a major impact on either them and their family or on their community. Patrons ages 16-29 are also less likely than those ages 30 and older to say that several services are “very important” to them and their family, though those in their late twenties are more likely than younger age groups to strongly value most services.

As with the general population, most younger Americans know where their local library is, but many are unfamiliar with all the services they offer. However, most younger Americans feel they can easily navigate their local library, and the vast majority would describe libraries as warm, welcoming places, though younger patrons are less likely to rate libraries' physical conditions highly.

Views about technology in libraries

Looking specifically at technology use at libraries, we found that as a group, patrons under age 30 are more likely than older patrons to [use libraries' computers and internet connections](#), but less likely to say these resources are very important to them and their families—particularly the youngest patrons, ages 16-17. Even though they are not as likely to say libraries are important, young adults do give libraries credit for embracing technology. Yet while younger age groups are often more ambivalent about the role and importance of libraries today than older adults, they do not necessarily believe that libraries have fallen behind in the technological sphere. Though respondents ages 16-29 were more likely than those ages 30 and older to agree that “public libraries have not done a good job keeping up with newer technologies” (43% vs. 31%), a majority of younger Americans (52%) disagreed with that statement overall.

About these surveys

This report covers the core findings from three major national surveys of Americans ages 16 and older. Many of the findings come from a survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16+ conducted in the fall of 2013. A full statement of the survey method and details can be found here:

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/03/13/methods-27/>.

The details and methods of the two other surveys can be found at:

<http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/01/22/methodology-8/>

<http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2012/04/04/methodology-2/>

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A Demographic Portrait of Younger Americans

Our surveys have confirmed that the demographic composition of those ages 16-29 is different from older generations. Our major 2013 survey found that [younger generations](#) are much more racially and ethnically diverse. They differ in other ways as well, particularly in terms of where they live and their general life stage. And though we cannot explore younger Americans' household income levels in great detail due to data limitations, our [library engagement typology found](#) that Americans' relationships with public libraries are part of their broader information and social landscapes, as people who have extensive economic, social, technological, and cultural resources are also more likely to use and value libraries as part of those networks.

Our [library typology](#) also found that life stage and special circumstances are linked to increased library use and higher engagement with information, and the [most highly engaged groups](#) in our typology contained higher proportion of parents, students, and job seekers.

We have previously examined [parents' closer relationships with libraries](#). The 2013 survey also found that students and job seekers are more likely to have used a

library in the past year overall. However, these groups (though potentially overlapping) differ in the value they place on various library services. For instance, students' higher rates of library use are not necessarily paired with higher reported reliance on library services, while job seekers are

Student status

Among all Americans ages 16+

		Student		
		Total	Full time	Part time
a	16-17	97 ^{bc}	89 ^{bc}	8
b	18-24	61 ^c	47 ^c	14 ^a
c	25-29	22	11	11
d	All 16-29	53 ^e	41 ^d	12 ^e
e	All 30+	9	2	3

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet Project Omnibus Survey, January 2-5, 2014. N= 1005 American adults ages 18 and older. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones, in English and Spanish.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Employment

Among all Americans ages 16+

		Employed		Currently looking for a job
		Total	Full time	Part time
a	16-17	33	4	26 ^c
b	18-24	67 ^a	36 ^a	31 ^c
c	25-29	75 ^{ab}	62 ^{ab}	13
d	All 16-29	65 ^e	40	25 ^e
e	All 30+	55	46 ^d	10

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet Project Omnibus Survey, January 2-5, 2014. N= 1005 American adults ages 18 and older. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones, in English and Spanish.

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significantly more likely to place a high value on many of the resources we asked about—starting with job search assistance. Among those who are currently looking for a job, 47% say that getting help finding or applying for a job at the library is "very important" to them and their family. Furthermore, job seekers are more likely to rank as highly important every library service we asked about, with the exception of free access to books and media.

Students' education level

Among students, the % who are a...

	High school student	College student (undergraduate)	Graduate student	Student at a community college	Student at a technical, trade, or vocational school
a 16-17	88 ^b	7	*	2	2
b 18-24	6	61 ^a	8 ^a	18 ^a	6 ^a
c 25-29	n/a (n<100)	n/a (n<100)	n/a (n<100)	n/a (n<100)	n/a (n<100)
d All 16-29	28 ^e	41 ^e	9	15	5
e All 30+	*	31	25 ^d	20	9 ^d

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet Project Omnibus Survey, January 2-5, 2014. N= 1005 American adults ages 18 and older. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones, in English and Spanish.

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Younger Americans' Reading Habits and Technology Use

Reading Habits

Our [previous research](#) on younger Americans' reading habits has shown that the youngest age groups are significantly more likely than older adults to read books, including print books; reading and research required for schoolwork contributes to this, along with a decline in overall reading rates for adults ages 65 and older.

As a group, younger Americans under age 30 are more likely than those 30 and older to report reading a book (in any format) at least weekly (67% vs 58%). Adults ages 50-64 are least likely to report reading books on a weekly basis, followed by those ages 30-49 and those ages 65 and older.

How often do you read a book, including print, audiobooks, and e-books?

Among Americans ages 16+

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Every day or almost every day	46	43	43	43	40
At least once a week	23	22	27	24 ^e	18
At least once a month	15	16	14	15	15
Less often	11	14	13	13	18 ^d
Never (VOL)	6	4	4	4	8 ^d

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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In response to a different question about the total number of books read in the past year, we found that younger Americans are also more likely than older adults to have read at least one book in that time (88% vs 79%). As in [other surveys](#), adults ages 65 and older are the age group least likely to have read a book in the past year.

A [separate survey from January 2014](#) found that while most adults among all age groups are reading print books, young adults have caught up to those in their thirties and forties in e-reading, with 37% of adults ages 18-29 reporting they have read an e-book in the past year.

Some 73% of 18-29 year-olds reported reading a book in print, and 15% said they listened to an audiobook.¹

Reading habits among younger Americans

Among Americans ages 16+

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Total read at least one book in the past year	88	87	88	88 ^e	79
Median books read in the past year (including non-readers)	8	6	6	6	5
Median books read in the past year among readers	10	7	7	7	7

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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Among those who read at least one book in the past year, a majority said they tend to purchase most of their books. Some 52% of all readers under age 30 said they purchase most of their books, while 39% of those under 30 say they tend to borrow most of their books—similar to the overall responses of older readers.

Most readers say they purchase most of the books they read

Among Americans ages 16+who read a book in the past year

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Purchase most books	41	56 ^a	53 ^a	52	50
Borrow most books	54 ^{ab}	36	37	39	37
About half and half (VOL)	4	6	8	7	9 ^d

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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¹ For more recent data on the reading habits of American adults ages 18 and older, including data on e-book readers and audiobook listeners, please see our recent report, "E-Reading Rises as Device Ownership Jumps" (2014), available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/01/16/e-reading-rises-as-device-ownership-jumps/>.

Those ages 16-17 who are book readers are most likely to borrow most of the books they read (54% say this). All older age groups, including those ages 18-24 and 25-29, are more likely to purchase their books than borrow them.

Other activities and media consumption

In the process of creating our [library engagement typology](#), we examined a range of activities that might help us learn more about other community activities Americans are engaged in, as well as relevant media consumption and technology usage habits. These questions are not comprehensive, but do help provide some context for Americans' library use.

Looking at a range of community activities, we found that some 39% of younger Americans under age 30 attend sporting events regularly, and 36% attend concerts, plays, or dance performances. Some 32% visit bookstores regularly, and 26% visit museums, art galleries, or historical sites.

More than half (56%) of older teens ages 16-17 regularly attend sporting events, making them more likely to do this than any other age group; however, they are less likely to visit bookstores regularly than young adults in their late twenties (26% vs 35%). Young adults ages 25-29 are also more likely than younger age groups to visit museums, art galleries, or historical sites regularly. Meanwhile, the rates of regular bookstore attendance and museum visits of young adults in their late twenties are similar to those of adults in their thirties and forties.

Community activities

Among Americans ages 16+, the % who regularly do the following activities

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Attend sporting events	56 ^{bc}	35	37	39 ^e	30
Go to concerts, plays, or dance performances	34	36	38	36 ^e	28
Go to a bookstore	26	32	35 ^a	32	32
Visit museums, art galleries, or historical sites	19	23	34 ^{ab}	26	31 ^d

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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In terms of general entertainment and media consumption, we found that 93% of respondents under age 30 listen to music, the radio, or a podcast in some format on a daily or near-daily basis, compared with 78% of those 30 and older. Younger Americans are also more likely to socialize with friends or family daily (88% vs 75%), but are less likely to watch TV or movies (71% vs 80%) or read the news (55% vs 64%). About four in ten Americans reported reading a book—in any format—on a daily basis, with no statistically significant differences between those ages 16-29 (43%) and adults 30 and older (40%).

Entertainment and media activities

Among Americans ages 16+, the % who do the following activities every day or almost every day

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Listen to music, talk radio, or a podcast, on any device	94	93	92	93 ^e	78
Socialize with friends or family in person, by phone, or online	88	91 ^c	84	88 ^e	75
Watch TV or movies, on any device	72	71	72	71	80 ^d
Read the news or a newspaper, in print or on any device	44	54 ^a	61 ^{ab}	55	64 ^d
Read a book, in any format	46	43	43	43	40

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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Technology Habits and Views

Technology use and gadget ownership

Younger Americans typically have higher rates of technology adoption than older adults, with 98% of those under 30 using the internet, and 90% of those internet users saying they using social networking sites. Twitter use among online 16-17 year-olds jumped to 50% in this survey; previous [Pew Research data](#) shows that teens have started to augment traditional social networking sites with smaller services such as Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, though [the vast majority still maintain a presence on Facebook](#).

Most younger Americans have a smartphone, compared with about half of adults 30 and older (due largely to low adoption rates among those 65 and older). Many also have a tablet or e-

reader, though adoption rates among 16-17 year-olds in particular may reflect overall household usage rather than personal ownership.²

Technology use and gadget ownership

Among all Americans ages 16 +

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Cell phone (including smartphone)	91	98	96	96 ^e	89
Smartphone	68	81	76	77 ^e	49
Tablet	46	33	42	38 ^e	34
E-reader	24	22	27	24	24
Internet use	97	99	96	98 ^e	82
Social networking site use (among internet users)	91	92	88	90 ^e	69
Twitter use (among internet users)	50	34	30	35 ^e	14

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Views about the internet

In order to dig deeper into the larger context surrounding Americans' relationships with libraries in the digital age, we also presented respondents with a series of statements about the impact of the internet. Respondents of all age groups generally agree that the internet makes it much easier to find information today than in the past, and most Americans feel that it's easy to separate good information from bad online. However, Americans under age 30 are actually more likely than older adults to say that there is a lot of useful, important information that is *not* available on the internet. They also believe that people without internet access are at a real disadvantage because of all the information they might be missing.

² For more information about device ownership, including 2014 data on adoption and demographics, please see our recent report, "E-Reading Rises as Device Ownership Jumps: (2014), available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/01/16/e-reading-rises-as-device-ownership-jumps/>.

Younger Americans' views about the internet

Among Americans ages 16+, the % who "agree" or "strongly agree" (combined)

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
The internet makes it much easier to find information today than it was in the past.	98	98	97	98 ^e	93
There is a lot of useful, important information that is NOT available on the internet	66 ^c	64	58	62 ^e	53
It's easy to separate the good information from the bad information online	58	56	57	57	55
People without internet access are at a real disadvantage because of all of the information they might be missing	79	79	79	79 ^e	76

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Younger Americans' Relationships with Public Libraries

Public library use

Some 61% of Americans under age 30 have a library card, similar to the rate for the general population. Younger Americans' rates of library usage are generally similar to that of older adults, and in the aggregate they are slightly more likely to have used a library in some form in the past year (57% vs 53%). However, it is important to note that there is frequently much variation between older age groups, with adults ages 30-49 reporting significantly higher library usage rates than most other groups, and those 65 and older reporting the lowest rates of use.³

Recent public library use

% of Americans ages 16+ who ...

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Have a library card	67	59	59	61	61
Visited library in past year	59 ^b	46	51	50	47
Used library website in past year	35	35	37	36 ^e	28
Total used library in past year	65 ^b	55	57	57 ^e	53
Total have ever used a library	91	88	89	89 ^e	86

Total public library use

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d 16-29	e 30+
Ever visited library	86	81	83	82	81
Ever used library website	49	59 ^{ac}	51	55 ^e	41
Total have ever used a library	91	88	89	89^e	86

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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³ Beyond age, our previous research has found that recent library visitors are more likely to be women, those under age 65, adults who have college degrees, and adults who live in households earning \$100,000 or more. Groups more likely than others to have used library websites include women, whites and African-Americans, those under age 50, adults with higher educational attainment, adults living in households earning \$75,000 or more, parents of minor children, and urban residents. More:

<http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/12/11/section-1-an-overview-of-americans-public-library-use/>

Younger Americans used libraries and bookmobiles in the past 12 months at slightly higher rates than older Americans. They were significantly more likely than older adults to have used a library website. They are also more likely to have ever used a library in the past. Overall, the percentage of all Americans who visited a library in person in the previous year fell from our 2012 to 2013 surveys, but the percentage who used a library website increased. Few library users made use of a library website without also visiting a library in person in that time, however, so overall library usage rates did not increase.

Among younger Americans ages 16-29, the proportion who visited a public library in person in the previous year dropped from 58% in November 2012 to 50% in September 2013; among older adults, the percentage dropped from 52% to 47%. Among younger age groups, the largest drop was among college-aged adults, as the percentage of 18-24 year-olds who visited a library fell from 56% in 2012 to 46% in 2013.

The proportion of younger Americans who used a library website in the previous year grew from 28% in 2012 to 36% in 2013, with the largest growth occurring among 16-17 year-olds (from 23% to 35%). The proportion of older adults (ages 30 and older) who used a library website in the previous year also grew, from 24% to 28%.

Looking at differences among younger age groups, we find that older teens ages 16-17 are more likely than those ages 18-24 to have visited a library in the past year, though 18-24 year-olds are more likely than any other age group to have ever used a library website (though not within the past year). However, among those who have visited a library in the past year, there are few differences in frequency of visits by age.

Visited a public library in person in the past year, over time

Among Americans ages 16+

	a 2012	b 2013
16-17	62	59
18-24	56 ^b	46
25-29	58	51
All those 16-29	58 ^b	50
All those 30+	52 ^b	47

Used a public library website in the past year, over time

	a 2012	b 2013
16-17	23	35 ^a
18-24	30	35
25-29	30	37
All those 16-29	28	36 ^a
All those 30+	24	28 ^a

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Frequency of library visits

Among Americans ages 16+ who visited a library in the past year

	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Total weekly	10	12	14	12	14
Total monthly	43	38	45	42	43
Total less often	44	49	41	45	43

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

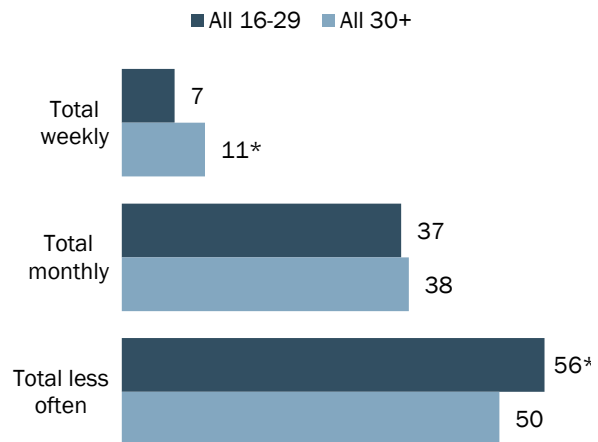
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Finally, while younger Americans are more likely to have ever used a library website, or even to have used one within the past year, older library website users' visits are somewhat more frequent: 11% of recent library users ages 30 and older say they use the website at least weekly, compared with 7% of those under 30.

Among those who have ever used a public library, most patrons across all age groups say their library use has stayed about the same over the past five years. Older patrons (particularly those ages 30-49) are more likely than other groups to say their library use has increased in that time, while younger patrons (particularly those ages 16-24) are more likely to say their library use has decreased.

Frequency of library website usage

Among Americans ages 16+ who used a library website in the past year



* indicates statistically significant difference between age groups.

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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Frequency of library visits

Among Americans ages 16+ who have ever used a public library

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Increased	13	12	15	13	17 ^d
About the same	52	50	60	54	58 ^d
Decreased	34 ^a	37 ^a	25	32 ^e	23

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Experiences with libraries

As with the general population, most Millennials know where their local library is, but many are unfamiliar with all the services they offer. However, most younger Americans feel they can easily navigate their local library, and few say they would have difficulty visiting their library or using its website. The vast majority would describe libraries as warm, welcoming places, but younger patrons are less likely to rate libraries' physical conditions highly: Though 70% of older patrons say they would describe their local library as a "nice, pleasant space to be," only 59% of younger patrons say this. Some 11% of younger patrons say they have had a negative experience at a library.

How long have you lived in the neighborhood where you live now?

Among Americans ages 16+

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Less than 1 year	10	23 ^a	19 ^a	19 ^e	8
1-5 years	26	33	44 ^{ab}	36 ^e	23
6-10 years	22 ^c	15	14	16	18
11-20 years	40 ^{bc}	20 ^c	9	19	20
More than 20 years	n/a	9 ^a	13 ^a	9	30 ^d

Do you know where the closest public library is to where you currently live?

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d 16-29	E 30+
Yes, know where it is	89	82	87	85	92 ^d
Not sure	11	18	13	15 ^e	8

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Knowledge of libraries

Overall, 85% of those under 30 know where the closest library is to where they live (compared with 92% of older adults), perhaps related to the fact that, as a group, younger Americans are more likely to be relative newcomers to their neighborhoods: Though most 16-17 year-olds have lived in their current neighborhood for at least six years (and 40% say they've lived there for most or all of their lives), a majority of the more transitory 18-29 year-olds have lived in their current neighborhood five years or less.⁴

As in previous studies, the very youngest and oldest age groups of patrons tend to know the least about services offered by their local library. Among patrons under age 30, some 19% say they know about “all or most” of the services offered by their local library, 45% say they know “some” of what is offered, and 24% know “not much.” An additional 12% say they know “nothing at all” about their local library’s offerings. These proportions are similar to what they were in 2012.

Younger Americans are less likely to know about “all or most” of the services and programs at their local public library

Among those who have ever used a library, the % who know...

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Know all or most of the services your library offers	21	17	19	19	25 ^d
Some of what it offers	39	45	47	45	47
Not much of what it offers	26	26	21	24 ^e	18
Nothing at all	14	11	13	12 ^e	9
Total all/most/some	60	63	66	64	72^d
Total not much/nothing	40	37	34	36^e	27

Source: Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. Based on ages 16+ who have ever used a public library (n=5,393).

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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⁴ In our [library engagement typology](#) report, we found that there is a distinct [low engagement](#) group of relatively younger people (with a median age of 33) who have used a library in the past, but have not lived in their neighborhood very long and do not know where the nearest library is located (“[Young and Restless](#)”). In this they differed from the two other low engagement groups, who either didn’t like libraries (Not for Me) or valued them, but were older and don’t use them as much (Rooted and Roadblocked.)

Perceptions of and experiences with their local library

In additional questions about the ease of finding and using their local library or its website, younger patrons were just as likely as older patrons to say they find it easy or very easy to visit a public library in person (94% vs. 93%), and are more likely to say it is easy or very easy to use the website of their library (90% vs. 79%).

Among those who have ever visited a library, 93% of patrons under 30 say it is easy to find what they're looking for when they visit their local library, and 94% say that public libraries are welcoming, friendly places—

rates almost identical to those of older patrons. However, though most younger library users say they would describe their local library as a “nice, pleasant space to be,” they are less likely to do so than older patrons (59% vs. 70%).

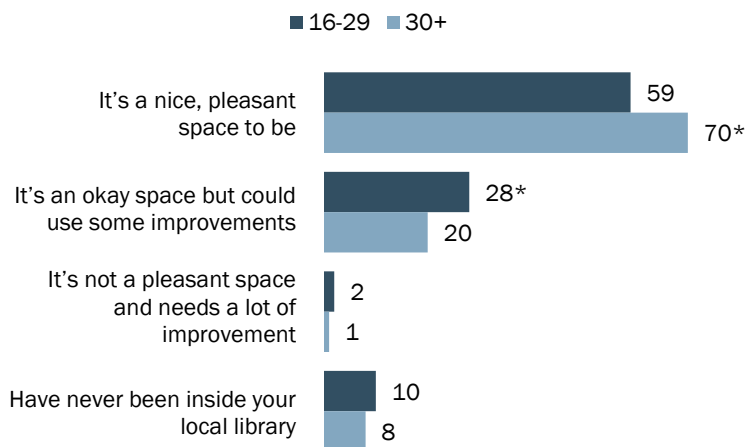
When those who have ever used a public library were asked specifically about negative experiences at libraries, patrons under age 30 were more likely to say they have ever had a negative experience at a library (11%) than older patrons (8%), though most said they had not.

Views on the evolving role of public libraries in their communities

As in previous years, younger Americans—particularly those under age 25—are less likely than older adults to say that if their local public library closed it would have a major impact on either them and their family or on their community, though they are generally as likely to say it would have an impact on their community overall. Some 19% of those under 30 say their library's closing would have a major impact on them and their family, compared with 32% of older adults, and 51% of younger Americans say it would have a major impact on their community, compared with 67% of those 30 and older.

Most describe local public library's physical condition positively

If you had to describe the physical condition of the public library nearest you, would you say...



* indicates statistically significant difference between age groups.

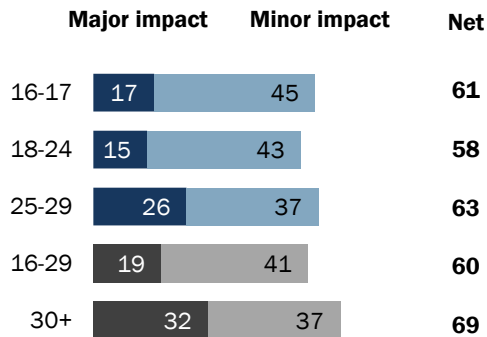
Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. Based on ages 16+ who have ever used a public library (n=5,393).

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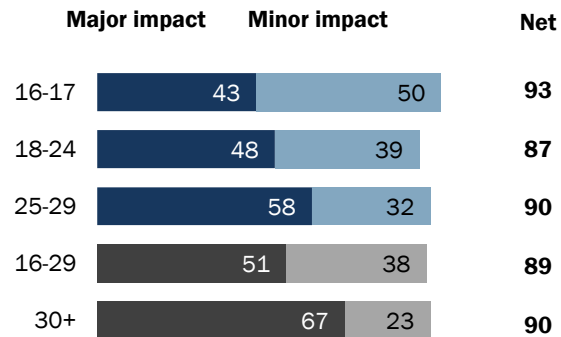
Younger age groups less likely to say their local public library's closing would have a major impact on their family or community

Among all Americans ages 16+

Impact on you & your family



Impact on your community



Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

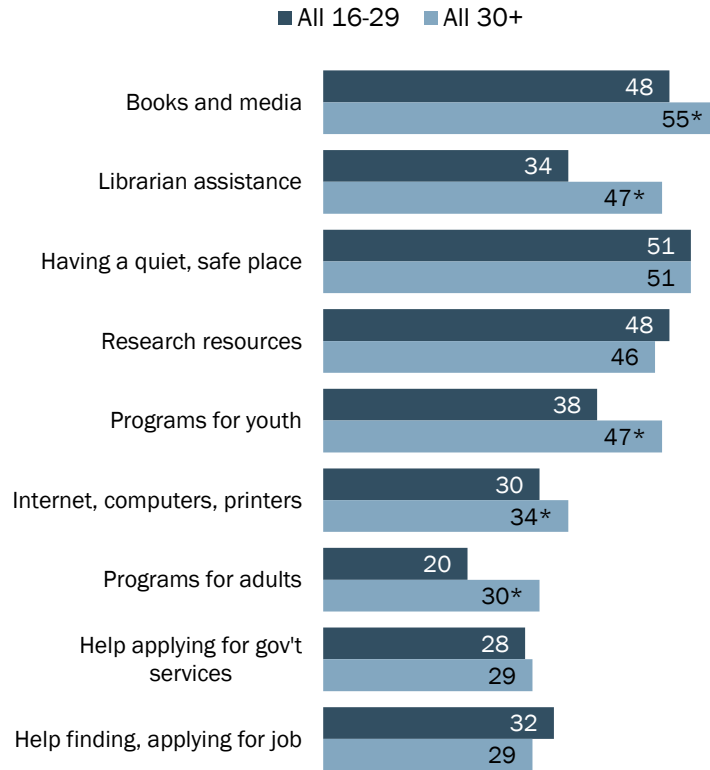
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Importance of library services

In our surveys, we asked younger Americans about [how they use public libraries](#), both in-person and online, and [which services they would like to see libraries offer](#) if they do not already do so. In our library engagement survey in 2013, however, we focused on how Americans rated the importance of various library services to themselves and to their families.

How important are these public library services to you and your family?

% among Americans ages 16+ who have ever used a public library or had a household member use a public library, the percentage who say these services are “very important” to them and their family



* indicates statistically significant difference between age groups.

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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Among those with library experience—that is, those who have ever used a public library, or who have a household member who uses a public library—patrons ages 16-29 are significantly less likely than those ages 30 and older to say that several services are “very important” to them and their family, including books and media (48% vs 55%), librarian assistance (34% vs 47%), programs for youth (38% vs 47%), internet and computers (30 vs 34%), and programs for adults (20% vs 30%).

At the same time, however, responses among older adults are not identical. It is important to note that [adults in their 30s and 40s are most likely to value many library services](#), while the very youngest and oldest age groups are least likely to highly value these services. In fact, those 65 and older are most likely to say that *none* of these library services are very important to them, and rate most services as less important overall.

Even among younger patrons, we found statistically significant differences in response to almost all of the services we asked about, with the exception of library assistance in finding or applying for jobs. Young adults in their late twenties are more likely than younger age groups, particularly 16-17 year olds, to strongly value most of the services we asked about. Some of the biggest gaps among patrons under 30 were using the library for books and media (37% of those ages 16-17 ranked this as “very important,” compared with 57% of those ages 25-29), programs for youth (25% vs 49%), using the library’s internet, computers, or printers (18% vs 39%), programs for adults (13% vs 27%), and help applying for government services (22% vs 35%).

How important are these public library services to you and your family?

% among Americans ages 16+ who have ever used a public library or have a household member who uses a public library, the % who say each of these services are “very important”

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Books and media	37	45	57 ^{ab}	48	55 ^d
Librarian assistance	29	31	41 ^{ab}	34	47 ^d
Having a quiet, safe place	42	51 ^a	54 ^a	51	51
Research resources	41	46	53 ^a	48	46
Programs for youth	25	34 ^a	49 ^{ab}	38	47 ^d
Internet, computers, printers	18	28 ^a	39 ^{ab}	30	34 ^d
Programs for adults	13	16	27 ^{ab}	20	30 ^d
Help applying for gov't services	22	25	35 ^{ab}	28	29
Help finding, applying for jobs	34	29	34	32	29

Source: Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

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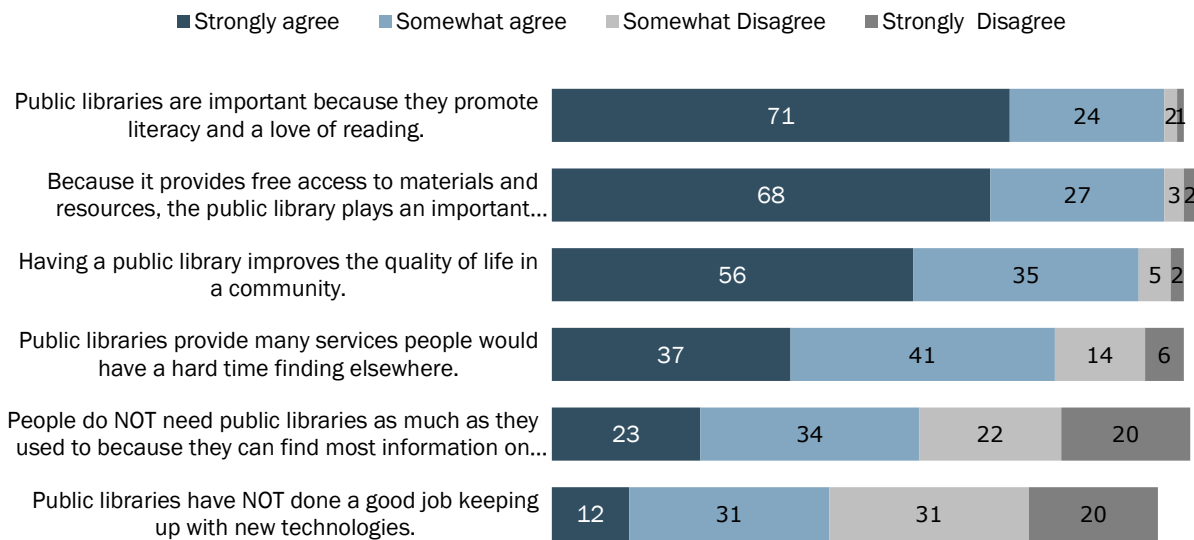
Beyond age, our research has found that women, African-Americans and Hispanics, adults who live in lower-income households, and adults with lower levels of educational attainment [are more likely](#) than other groups to say these services are “very important.”

Broader views about libraries

Younger Americans as a rule have positive views about the role of libraries in communities, though they are somewhat less likely than older Americans to feel as strongly about the positive attributes of libraries. The chart below outlines the views of Millennials on some basic attitudinal questions we asked in our 2013 survey:

Younger Americans' views on public libraries' roles in their communities

Among Americans ages 16+, the percentage who agree or disagree with each statement



Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

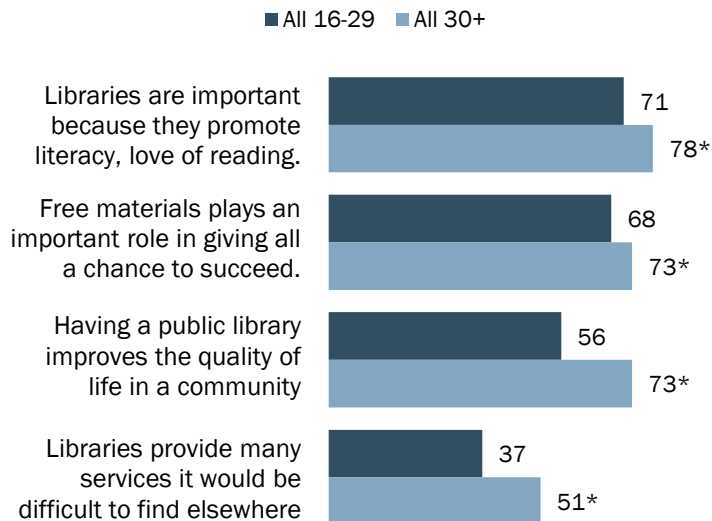
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Younger Americans are significantly less likely to “strongly agree” with each of these statements than those ages 30 and older:

- Public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading (71% vs. 78%)
- Because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed (68% vs. 73%)
- Having a public library improves the quality of life in a community (56% vs. 73%)
- Public libraries provide many services people would have a hard time finding elsewhere (37% vs. 51%)

Views on public libraries’ roles in their communities

Among Americans who have ever used a library or had a household member use a library, the % who “strongly agree” with each statement



* indicates statistically significant difference between age groups

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline & cell phones.

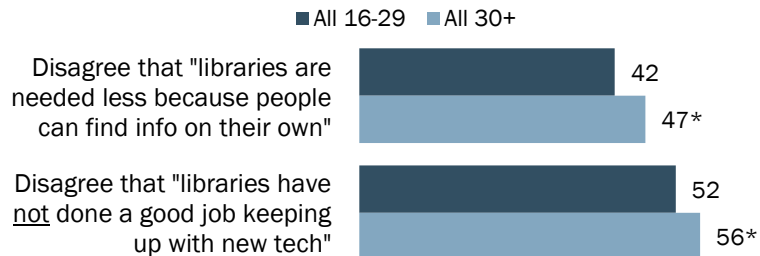
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Younger Americans are significantly less likely to disagree with each of these statements than those ages 30 and older overall (including “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses):

- People do *not* need public libraries as much as they used to because they can find most information on their own (42% vs. 47%)
- Public libraries have *not* done a good job keeping up with new technologies (52% vs. 56%).

Views on public libraries and technology

Among Americans who have ever used a library or had a household member use a library, the percentage who “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with each statement (combined)



* indicates statistically significant difference between age groups

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline & cell phones.

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“Public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading”

“Public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading”

% who “strongly agree”

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Strongly agree	63	70	76 ^{ab}	71	78 ^d
Somewhat agree	33 ^c	26 ^c	19	24 ^e	17
Somewhat disagree	3	3	1	2	2
Strongly disagree	1	2	1	1	2
Total Agree	95	95	96	95	95
Total Disagree	4	5	3	4	4

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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Overall, the youngest age groups are least likely to strongly value public libraries for literacy promotion efforts: Just 63% of older teens ages 16-17 say they “strongly agree” that libraries are important for this reason, as well as 70% of those ages 18-24, compared with 76% of adults in

their late twenties. Younger age groups were *not* more likely to disagree with this statement, however, and were as likely as other age groups to agree with it overall.

There are few differences among older age groups when it comes to this view, with 78% of adults ages 30 and older strongly agreeing that this is an important role for libraries.

“Because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed”

Young adults in their late twenties (73%) are also more likely than 16-17 year-old (63%) and college-aged (67%) respondents to strongly agree that public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed by providing free access to materials and resources. Younger age groups were more likely to simply “agree” with this statement, though they were *not* more likely to disagree.

“Because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed”

% who “strongly agree”

	a 16-17	b 18-24	c 25-29	d All 16-29	e All 30+
Strongly agree	63	67	73 ^a	68	73 ^d
Somewhat agree	31 ^c	29 ^c	22	27 ^e	23
Somewhat disagree	5	3	2	3	2
Strongly disagree	1	1	3	2	2
Total Agree	94	95	94	95	95
Total Disagree	6	4	5	5	4

Source: Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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“Having a public library improves the quality of life in a community”

“Having a public library improves the quality of life in a community”

% who “strongly agree”

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Strongly agree	41	56 ^a	65 ^{ab}	56	73 ^d
Somewhat agree	49 ^{ab}	35	30	35 ^e	21
Somewhat disagree	8 ^c	6	3	5 ^e	3
Strongly disagree	2	3	2	2	2
Total Agree	90	91	93	92	94^d
Total Disagree	10	8	5	7^e	4

Source: Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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The belief that a community’s quality of life is improved by the presence of a public library correlates strongly with age: Adults ages 30 (73%) and older are more likely to strongly agree with this statement than those in their late twenties (65%), who are more likely to strongly agree than those ages 18-24 (56%); the youngest age group in our survey, those ages 16-17, were least likely to strongly agree with this statement (41%) than any other age group.

Young adults under age 30 are slightly more likely to disagree with this statement overall than older adults (7% vs 4%).

“Public libraries provide many services people would have a hard time finding elsewhere”

Overall, 78% of Americans under age 30 agree that public libraries provide many services people would have a hard time finding elsewhere, including 37% who strongly agree. Adults ages 50 and older are actually most likely to strongly back this statement, with 54% of those 50-64 and 56% of those 65 and older strongly agreeing.

“Public libraries provide many services people would have a hard time finding elsewhere”

% who “strongly agree”

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Strongly agree	34	36	40	37	51 ^d
Somewhat agree	45	43	37	41 ^e	31
Somewhat disagree	16	13	14	14 ^e	10
Strongly disagree	5	6	7	6 ^e	4
Total Agree	79	79	77	78	82 ^d
Total Disagree	21	19	21	20 ^e	14

Source: Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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“People do not need public libraries as much as they used to because they can find most information on their own”

Younger adults are somewhat more likely than older age groups to feel that public libraries are not as necessary as they used to be because people can now find most information on their own. Among the younger age groups, 16-17 year-olds are most likely to feel that libraries are not as necessary these days, while young adults in their late twenties are most likely to disagree. However, though this belief tracks with age to some extent, there are differences as well among older age groups: Adults ages 65 and older (25%) are actually more likely to strongly agree that people do not need libraries for information as much than those ages 30-64.

“People do not need public libraries as much as they used to because they can find most information on their own”

% who “strongly agree”

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Strongly agree	27	25	20	23	21
Somewhat agree	41 ^c	34	30	34 ^e	30
Somewhat disagree	18	22	23	22 ^e	19
Strongly disagree	14	18	26 ^{ab}	20	28 ^d
Total Agree	68^{bc}	59^c	50	57^e	51
Total Disagree	32	40	49^{ab}	42	47^d

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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“Public libraries have not done a good job keeping up with new technologies”

Yet while younger age groups are often more ambivalent about the importance of libraries, they do not necessarily believe that libraries have fallen behind in the technological sphere. Though respondents ages 16-29 were more likely than those ages 30 and older to agree that “public libraries have not done a good job keeping up with newer technologies” (43% vs. 31%), a majority of younger Americans (52%) disagreed with that statement overall. Adults ages 30 and older were also more likely to say they don’t know (12%, vs. 5% of those under 30.)

“Public libraries have not done a good job keeping up with new technologies”

% who “strongly agree”

	a	b	c	d	e
	16-17	18-24	25-29	All 16-29	All 30+
Strongly agree	16	12	10	12	10
Somewhat agree	33	31	30	31 ^e	21
Somewhat disagree	34	32	28	31 ^e	27
Strongly disagree	17	20	23	20	30 ^d
Total Agree	49	43	40	43^e	31
Total Disagree	51	52	51	52	56^d

Source: Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-Sept. 30, 2013. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.

Note: Rows marked with a superscript letter (^a) or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that column and the column designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.

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