

Though many library services are seen as important, there are varying levels of enthusiasm for different services

Some 91% of Americans say they have had some exposure to libraries in the past, and we asked these respondents a series of questions about the importance of various library services to them and their families.¹

Americans strongly value library services such as access to books and media; having a quiet, safe place to spend time, read, or study; and having librarians to help people find information. Other services, such as assistance finding and applying for jobs, are more important to particular groups, including those with lower levels of education or household income.

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 declare all the library services we asked about "very important." Adults ages 30-64 are also more likely than younger or older respondents to say many of the services are "very important," as are parents with minor children.

How important are these 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	Somewhat Important	Net
Books and media	54	27	80
Librarian assistance	44	32	76
Having a quiet, safe place	51	24	75
Research resources	47	25	72
Programs for youth	45	24	69
Internet, computers, printers	33	25	58
Programs for adults	28	30	58
Help applying for gov't services	29	24	53
Help finding, applying for job	30	21	51

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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Libraries are also particularly valued by those who are unemployed, retired, or searching for a job, as well as those living with a disability and internet users who lack home internet access:

- 56% of internet users without home access say public libraries' basic technological resources (such as computers, internet, and printers) are "very important" to them and their family, compared with 33% of all respondents.
- 49% of unemployed and retired respondents say they librarian assistance in finding information to be "very important," compared with 41% of employed respondents.
- 47% of job seekers say help finding or applying for a job is "very important" to them and their families.
- 40% of those living with a disability say help applying for government services is "very important," compared with 27% of those without a disability.

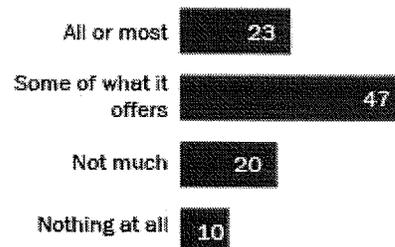
Most Americans know where their local library is, but many are unfamiliar with all the services they offer.

Libraries are well known in their communities and they are usually easy to get to and relatively easy to navigate. Asked about their ability to access public libraries and public library websites:

- 91% of Americans say they know where the closest public library is to where they currently live; among these respondents, most said the closest public library is five miles or less away from their home.
- 93% of Americans say that it would be easy to visit a public library in person if they wanted to, with 62% saying it would be “very easy.”
- Similarly, 82% of Americans overall say it would be easy to use their local public library’s website, with 47% saying it would be “very easy.”
- 91% of Americans who have ever used a public library say it is not difficult to find what they’re looking for, including 35% who say it is “very easy.”

How well-informed do you feel about the different services your public library offers?

Do you feel like you know...



Based on Americans ages 16+ who have ever used a public library (n=5,393)

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Despite the fact that libraries are easily available to most, there are large numbers of Americans who say they are not sure about all the services libraries offer. Echoing the findings of our 2012 survey, 23% of those who have ever used a public library said they feel like they know all or most of the service and programs their library offers, while a plurality (47%) said that they know some of what it offers. About one in five (20%) say they don’t know very much about what is offered, and 10% say they know “nothing at all.”