

LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMISSION (LAC)

On Monday, January 13, 2025 at 6:30 PM

This is a hybrid in person and online provided meeting open to the public

Public Viewing:

The meeting will be broadcast through the Santa Cruz Libraries YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/SantaCruzPL> which you can access through the Santa Cruz Libraries website by scrolling to the bottom of the page and clicking on the YouTube icon.

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Please click the link below to join the webinar:

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The meetings will be recorded and posted for viewing after the meetings on the Santa Cruz Public Libraries website <http://www.santacruzpl.org/>

Public comment: There are three ways to comment during this meeting. All comments must be received prior to the close of public comment on that agenda item:

1. How to comment on agenda items via email before the meeting begins:

Members of the public may provide public comment by sending an email to the Library Board Clerk at clerk@santacruzpl.org

- Identify the agenda item number in the subject line of the email
- Emailed comments should be a maximum of 500 words, which corresponds to approximately 3 minutes of speaking time.

- All correspondences received prior to 12:00 p.m. on the Friday preceding a LAC Meeting will be distributed to Commission members to review prior to the meeting. Information submitted after 12:00 p.m. on that Friday may not have time to reach Commission members, nor be read by them prior to consideration of an item.

2. How to comment on agenda items during the meeting and prior to the close of public comment on an item, using the Zoom Q&A feature:

- Type your comment using the “Q&A” feature found on the Zoom control bar
- Identify the agenda item first, then type your comment
- Your comment will be read aloud

3. How to comment aloud on agenda items, during the meeting and prior to the close of public comment on an item, via the Zoom “raise hand” feature:

If you are accessing the meeting using the Zoom app and using computer audio:

- During the comment period for that agenda item, use the “raise hand” icon found on the Zoom control bar
- The moderator will announce your name or the last 3 digits of your phone number when it is your turn to speak
- Unmute yourself using the microphone icon
- Identify the agenda item
- Introduce yourself using your first and last name
- You will have three minutes of speaking time

If you are accessing the meeting using telephone audio:

- During the comment period for that agenda item, press *9 to raise your hand
- The moderator will announce the last 3 digits of your phone number when it is your turn to speak
- Unmute yourself using *6 – to toggle the mute/unmute feature
- Identify the agenda item
- Introduce yourself using your first and last name
- You will have three minutes of speaking time



LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2025 at 6:30 PM

APTOS BRANCH

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioners Rena Dubin, Charlotte Khandelwal, Vivian Rogers, Mike Termini, Pamela Woll, and Tricia Wynne

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Any member of the audience may address the Board on any matter either on or off the agenda that is within the Board's jurisdiction. Note, however, that the Board is not able to undertake extended discussion or act on non-agendized items. Such items can be referred to staff for appropriate action which may include placement on a future agenda. If you intend to address a subject that is on the Agenda, please hold your comments regarding that item until it is before the Board so that we may properly address all comments on that subject at the same time. In general 3 minutes will be permitted per speaker during Oral Communication; A MAXIMUM of 30 MINUTES is set aside for Oral Communications at this time.

4. REPORT BY LIBRARY DIRECTOR

A. Library Director's Report (P3-8)

5. REPORT BY FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARIES

A. Friends of SCPL – Report (Oral)

6. MEMBER REPORTS

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

All items listed in the "Consent Calendar" will be enacted by one motion in the form listed below. There will be no separate discussion on these items prior to the time the Board votes on the action unless members of the public or the Board request specific items to be discussed for separate review. Items pulled for separate discussion will be considered following General Business.

- A. Minutes of October 7, 2024
RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approve Minutes (P9-11)
- B. Recent Articles about Santa Cruz Public Libraries
RECOMMENDED ACTION: Accept and file (P12-21)

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

General Business items are intended to provide an opportunity for public discussion of each item listed. The following procedure is followed for each Business item: 1) Staff explanation; 2) Board questions; 3) Public comment; 4) Board deliberation; 5) Decision.

- A. Elect Chair and Vice Chair for 2025
RECOMMENDED ACTION: Propose and vote upon candidates for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission (P22)
- B. Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Privacy Policy #303
RECOMMENDED ACTION: Endorse the Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Data Privacy Policy #303 for the Library Joint Powers Authority Board adoption (P23-27)
- C. Library Promotional Merchandise: A Sustainable Proposal Presentation by Ana Maria Treadwell, Community Relations Specialist (P28-35)
- D. Planned Website Migration Presentation by Carlos Silva, Library IT Manager
- E. Libraries & Well-Being: A Case Study from The New York Public Library (P35-79)

9. SCHEDULED UPCOMING MEETINGS

Date	Location	Anticipated Upcoming Agenda Items:
April 14, 2025	Scotts Valley Branch	•

10. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned to the next regular meeting of the Library Advisory Commission to be held on Monday, April 14, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Scotts Valley Branch.

The Santa Cruz City-County Library System does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. Out of consideration for people with chemical sensitivities, we ask that you attend fragrance free. Upon request, the agenda can be provided in a format to accommodate special needs. Additionally, if you wish to attend this public meeting and will require assistance such as an interpreter for American Sign Language, Spanish, or other special equipment, please call the Library Administration Office at 427-7706 at least five days in advance so that we can arrange for such special assistance, or email library_admin@santacruzpl.org.



January 13, 2025

Director's Report to the Library Advisory Commission

Introduction

The 2nd fiscal quarter of the year has proven to be a busy one with major touchstones of the all staff in service training day in October, the Live Oak Library Annex open house in November, and budget prep meetings during December. Additionally my calendar as Director has seen me speak at the Aptos Chamber of Commerce's lunch meeting in October, deliver talks to the San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley Rotary Clubs, attend the California State Library's Directors Forum in Pasadena, participate in a panel of library directors for the State Library's Catalyst Library Leadership Program at Asilomar, represent SCPL at the Monterey Bay Area Cooperative Library System meeting and then again as an advisor for the California Libraries Learn continuing education program for the State Library. I will be attending Santa Cruz Works' Titans of Tech event later this week in support of Sarah Beck and the Friends of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries. I have met with incoming Santa Cruz City Council Member Gabriela Trigueiro and have reached out to her counterpart Susie O'Hara. I have meetings scheduled with incoming County Supervisors Kim De Serpa and Monica Martinez later in January.

Library Team

We have hired Jesse Silva into the leadership team level Librarian III position managing Outreach Services. Jesse's extensive record of overseeing and evolving SCPL's services to the incarcerated, homeless, homebound, farm workers and others positions us well to explore increased partnerships and services throughout our service area going forward.

New Hires and Promotions:

- Eileen Dunn has been promoted to Accounting Asst II in Library Headquarters effective 10/12/24
- John Yarbro has been hired as Bookmobile Library Asst II effective 12/7/24
- Sarah Fleck has been hired as Librarian I at La Selva Beach effective 12/7/24
- Eric Chalfant has been promoted to Library Asst III, Bookmobile Branch Manager effective 12/7/24
- Alicia Hernandez has been promoted to Library Asst III, Felton Branch Manager effective 12/7/24
- Dana Gier has been promoted to Library Asst III, Garfield Park Branch Manager effective 12/7/24
- Elizabeth Lopez has been hired as Library Asst III at the Downtown Library effective 12/7/24

- Ann Young has returned the Library Information Technology team on a temporary basis to assist with the Library Website Migration Project beginning in January, 2025

Helga Smith, Administrative Assistant II in Library Headquarters Administration, is out on FMLA.

Staff Departures:

- Phillip Boulton (“Felton Phil”), Branch Manager for Felton, resigned effective 11/22/24
- Oscar Hernandez, Librarian at Branciforte Library, resigned effective 12/12/24
- Ken Madonia, Service Field Crew Leader for Facilities, retired effective 12/27/24

We are interviewing for Assistant Director of Libraries in mid-January.

Sara De Leon, the Human Resources Director for the City of Santa Cruz hosted two citywide Managers and Supervisors training sessions to review position benchmarking & mapping in advance of an upcoming compensation study.

Services

Our new Training Coordinator has been kept busy with onboarding her third cohort of new hires, scheduling them into two-week intensive training programs before they are fully released to their unit assignments. We will be spending the rest of FY25 investigating the effectiveness of this approach and looking for ways to streamline the process and get new hires to their units earlier.

Our new Volunteer Coordinator is in the process of moving all volunteer applications and hours tracking into the online Better Impact system the Library has long subscribed to. This is a simple online system that tracks and reports volunteer hours by location and activity and replaces the written hours tracking used previously at branches. Since July 1st, this system reports 52 volunteers have donated 1,263 hours of their time.

In November, Jail Reach expanded its offering of PlayAway mp3 audiobooks from Juvenile Hall to the Blaine Street Women’s Facility. These self-contained devices are an excellent option for people with learning and reading challenges. That month Senator John Laird visited the Boundless Minds Library to present a certificate celebrating the collaboration between the County Office of Education, Santa Cruz County Probation, the Friends of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries and SCPL that made this onsite resource possible. Additionally, Jail Reach delivered 3D Puzzles and “Boundless Minds” beanies to students at Juvenile Hall on Christmas Eve.

At Downtown Library’s Life Literacies Center, Volunteer Housing Navigators assisted 14 people with housing search, rental applications, interviews with landlords, Housing Authority voucher program, and connecting with social service agencies. 2 people successfully achieved housing and moved into their homes. The powerful impact of this program comes from the Housing Navigators’ patience, persistence, knowledge, and ability to create a relationship of trust with each patron

Libraries

The Live Oak Library Annex (LOLA) Open House took place in November and it was a glowing success. The UCSC Mexican folkloric dance group, *Grupo Folklórico Los Mejicas*, brought

many people out to celebrate. Since the Open House, SCPL has offered library service hours at LOLA each Wednesday and Friday afternoon. LOLA staff help maintain the collection of about 500 books, empty the bookdrop, and assist patrons with library related questions.

We continue to coordinate with the County and local Friends chapters on the installation of solar panels at Capitola Library, installation of new fencing at Aptos Library, and the potential for a permanent backup generator for Felton Library.

In early December, The City of Santa Cruz, Eden Housing and For The Future Housing announced the Downtown Library & Affordable Housing Project has been granted the final funding award needed to begin construction. We are anticipating groundbreaking to occur in Spring and will be working with Friends of the SCPL on a community engagement event celebrating this progress shortly before that date.

Upcoming

Cost scenarios for the support services provided by the City of Santa Cruz to the LJPA were presented to the LJPA Board on December 9th. The JPAB will determine the final funding and support services contract as part of the budget process in early 2025.

In upcoming LAC meetings, Library team members will report on Summer Reading, Volunteer Services, Staff Training, and the next round of policy updates which will include a new policy on Children and Teens Protection to address concerns from Risk Management.

The Library Website Migration Project has launched in December and is anticipated to be complete by mid-Summer. To accommodate the robust staff engagement required of both, we will delay the start of the next generation of strategic planning to the late Summer.

Youth Programming Highlights

- **Downtown:** Sewing for Kids and Afterschool STEAM: Minecraft have started. Both programs have had good attendance with sewing being consistently full (over 20 participants). The Minecraft program is modeled after the one already in place at the Aptos branch with laptops with Minecraft Educational loaded on them for kids to play in a closed world moderated by library staff and volunteers. Sewing for Kids is a new program for kids ages 7-12 where a different hand-sewing project is offered each month. The project is designed to be completed in an hour even if the participant has no previous sewing experience.
- **Boulder Creek, Downtown and Aptos Branches** offered a special winter program: Fratello Marionettes presented *A North Pole Review*.
- **Scott's Valley's** Spooktober Celebration was a huge success with 225 attendees!

Early Literacy/Kindergarten Readiness

- **Felton** celebrated a "Special Winter Holidays Preschool Storytime & Winter Luminary Craft" program where we learned about different ways people across different cultures celebrate this season of light, beginning with Diwali in fall, and Bodhi Day, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and the Solstice, in December, ending in the Lunar New Year! 23

people attended and families reported that they loved the storytime and that the Luminary Craft made it extra special!

Safe After School

- **Felton's** Make & Explore! Programs were a hit this December! Children loved making their simple circuit snowman cards, as well as cinnamon salt dough ornaments, which has become a Felton Library family tradition.

Teens

- **North County Advisory Council of Teens** saw an explosion of participation in October with 7 new members! Local teens learned about volunteer opportunities, enjoyed free pizza, and had time to relax making a 3-d hand-sewn ghost ornament for spooky season! The teens told me that they had a great time and are excited to come back. The teens returned for the next two weeks to help out with our Lego program and reported having a great time and that it helped them de-stress.

School Partnerships

- As part of the COE's Inside Education program, Heather Norquist and Jackie Danziger toured the SLV Middle School campus and the Hartman School at Juvenile Hall to learn about the unique programs offered at each location.

Community Partnerships

- **Scott's Valley:** Emily Bresett met with representatives from youth serving organizations in the Scotts Valley area representing the library in the United Way Youth Leadership process. Emily and Brian Gnerre also met with Scotts Valley Parks and Recreation to discuss possible collaborations providing after school programming for Scott's Valley Library tweens and teens.
- **Garfield Park:** Jr. Rangers programs on 10/16, 11/21, and 12/19 in partnership with Cal State Park Rangers saw increased attendance compared to previous series offered.

Youth Programs and Services Manager Heather Norquist attended several valuable trainings offered by community partners:

- Youth Action Network Convening, an opportunity to discuss strategies for increasing youth engagement and leadership with other youth-oriented organizations.
- Annual First Five Literacy Network for Raising A Reader meeting with area Head Start teachers presented by First 5 and PVUSD.
- Amah Mutsun Educator Workshop highlighting local history of and resources to share with youth about First Peoples in our region.
- Screening of *Fentanyl High* and follow up discussion about the dangers of fentanyl and the life-saving benefits of Narcan presented by the SCCOE.

Adult Programming:

Grants:

- Librarian Rowan Rammer was awarded a Digital Literacy Workshop Incentive grant from the Public Library Association and AT&T to continue the important and popular technology and digital literacy workshops and tech help sessions for patrons.
- Librarian Lorena Lopez was awarded a Stargazing Kits grant from the California State Parks and the California State Library Parks Pass program that includes two new telescopes for our Library of Things collection.

Fall Program Highlights:

- **Aptos** held a 4-part Digital Skills Workshop series of Iphone & Ipad Basics, Computer Safety, Design with Canva, and Getting Started with Mac OS11 on Your Laptop. At the Plus Size Masc Clothing Swap multiple patrons voiced excitement over finding items that were their size and gender affirming. Shakespeare Saturdays started a 5-week series exploring the play Much Ado About Nothing.
- **Boulder Creek** has a new volunteer-led Quilting with Friends group.
- **Branciforte** has a new volunteer-led monthly Book Club.
- **Capitola** hosted the Gaza Surf Club: Film Screening and Discussion. The November 2024 State Ballot Measures forum with the League of Women Voters Santa Cruz County, co-sponsored by AAUW, brought an overflowing crowd of 125 people to become more informed voters. The branch now hosts a new monthly program, Zentangle Art.
- **Downtown** hosted Santa Cruz Shakespeare's A Christmas Carol: Dramaturgy Talk, the League of Women Voters' November 2024 State Ballot Measures forum, and a new Spirituality of Aging 6-week series.
- **Felton** started Tenants' Rights 1-on-1 Counseling.
- **Garfield Park** started a new Conversations in Español club.
- **La Selva Beach** had a Bird Talk & Walk.
- **Live Oak Library Annex** held 12 ongoing volunteer-led English Language Conversation Group meetings.
- **Scotts Valley** held a talk about Myth-Busting Menopause, a Photo Management Workshop, a Sumi-e Japanese Ink Painting class, and started a new monthly Tech Discussion Meetup.
- Our **Veterans Connect** information booths popped up at Aptos, Boulder Creek, Capitola, and Scotts Valley.
- **Virtual Tech Talks workshops on Zoom** topics included AI Prompting for Learning, Digital Safety Tips, and Parental Controls.

- **Offsite** - Bestselling author Leila Mottley joined local UCSC alumnus, community organizer, and social entrepreneur Ayo Banjo in conversation at the Resource Center for Nonviolence.

Upcoming Adult Program Highlights:

- **Aptos** will have Estate Planning Basics for You & Your Family in January.
- **Boulder Creek** will screen the documentary Little Penguin Love Island, the story of the world's smallest penguins looking for love on Australia's biggest island, and host a discussion with the film's director, science journalist and filmmaker Anne Roth in February.
- **Branciforte** is starting a new monthly writing workshop.
- **Capitola** will offer a 5-part series in January, "What Got You Here WILL Get You There: Approaching the Job Market after 60," including a guest presenter on using AI in your job search. The branch will also host Chinese Calligraphy for the Lunar New Year in January.
- **Downtown** will host author Rob Osler in conversation with Nina Simon in January to discuss his new historical mystery, *The Case of the Missing Maid*, featuring his new character Harriet Morrow, a bike-riding, trousers-wearing, young lesbian protagonist, in turn-of-the-century Chicago. Downtown will start a new monthly live jazz music lunchtime concert series in February.
- **Felton** is offering The Art of Listening, an interactive two-part seminar on communication skills in January. In March, Master Composters will offer a Basic Composting Workshop.
- **Garfield Park** will host a Westside Author Talk with retired pastry chef Stephany Buswell in January. In February the branch will have a Writing Group for 55+.
- **Scotts Valley** will offer Sumi-e Japanese Ink Painting classes in January.
- **Boulder Creek, Capitola, Garfield Park, and Live Oak Library Annex** will each host, between January-April, "Understanding the California Farmworker Experience" with Dr. Ann López, Executive Director of the Center for Farmworker Families.
- **Boulder Creek, Garfield Park, and Live Oak Library Annex** will offer performances of Music of the West African Kora in March.



LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, October 7, 2024 at 6:30 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Charlotte Khandelwal, Mike Termini, Pamela Woll, Tricia Wynne,
Nancy Gerdt, Vivian Rogers, Rena Dubin
STAFF: Library Director Christopher Platt

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

RESULT:	APPROVED THE AGENDA
MOVER:	Tricia Wynne
SECONDER:	Rena Dubin
AYES:	Khandelwal, Termini, Woll, Wynne, Gerdt, Rogers, Dubin

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

A member of the public, Marylin Garrett, spoke about censorship in the library and vaccine issues.

4. REPORT BY LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Library Director Christopher Platt provided a written report and spoke about several highlights concerning an Open House at the Live Oak Annex on November 23, as well as branch visits with Sara de Leon, HR Director, with the goal to create more connection among staff and to improve the culture. Finally, he thanked outgoing Assistant Director Eric Howard for his years of service.

5. REPORT BY FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Sarah Beck, Executive Director of the Friends spoke about the recent Friends Summit.

6. MEMBER REPORTS

Rena Dubin spoke about a recent Washington Post article “Who Uses Libraries the Most”.

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

RESULT:	APPROVED THE CONSENT CALENDAR Items A - D
	A. Approved Minutes of July 7, 2024
	B. Recent Articles about SCPL
MOVER:	Charlotte Khandelwal
SECONDER:	Vivian Rogers
AYES:	Khandelwal, Termini, Woll, Gerdt, Rogers, Wynne, Dubin

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

- A.** Revised Collection Development Policy #302. Presentation by Sarah Harbison, CMS Manager.

The Commissioners asked a number of questions and explored suggestions for children’s books. The topic of “digital” vs. “physical” books was discussed.

Public Comment by Marilyn Garrett regarding donations of books to the library.

- B.** Library Safety Guidelines: a presentation by Laura Whaley, Facilities Manager.

The Commissioners asked about policies regarding evacuation/closure of branches due to air quality pollution. Generators at all branches was discussed.

Public Comment by Marilyn Garrett: disagrees with Wifi in the libraries.

- C.** 2025 Library Advisory Commission (LAC) Meeting Schedule

RESULT:	Approved the 2025 Meeting Schedule.
MOVER:	Tricia Wynne
SECONDER:	Rena Dubin
AYES:	Khandelwal, Termini, Woll, Wynne, Gerdt, Rogers, Dubin

9. SCHEDULED UPCOMING MEETINGS

January 13, 2025 at the Aptos Branch Library.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 8:00 pm to the next regular meeting of the Library Advisory Commission to be held on Monday, January 13, 2025 at 6:30pm at the Aptos Branch Library.



SANTA CRUZ
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 13, 2025
TO: Library Advisory Commission
FROM: Ana Maria Treadwell, Community Relations Specialist
RE: Recent Articles about Santa Cruz Public Libraries

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Accept and File Recent Articles about SCPL.

DISCUSSION

This Media packet covers the time period for October, 2024 through December, 2024.

Library Advisory Commission

Media Packet

(Oct 1st – Dec 30th, 2024)

In the News and Media



October 2, 2024: COASTAL AREAS SURPRISINGLY HOT AS HEAT WAVE SWEEPS SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

By Brooke Kinebrew

The weather is hot this week, both inland and even along the coast. An intense heat wave is affecting Santa Cruz County, even along the coast. Many people are seeking relief at the beach on this ideal day.

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. —The weather is hot this week, both inland and even along the coast. An intense heat wave is affecting Santa Cruz County, even along the coast. Many people are seeking relief at the beach on this ideal day.

"It's an escape, definitely," explained Devonna Meyer, a Morgan Hill resident, who spent the day at a Santa Cruz County beach to escape the heat. "I saw the temperatures here were going to be pretty ideal and very hot over there. So I'm like, 'I'm in. I'm over there, not here today.'"

"When I looked over here, it looked like it was going to be like 85, which is still hot. That's hot over here," said Steve Gold, a resident of San Jose. "But then, soon as I came down the road here, it was like 75, and that's very comfortable."

If cooling off by the water isn't your thing, libraries throughout Santa Cruz County also opened their doors.

"They can just come inside, cool down," Catherine Workman, a Santa Cruz Library Assistant, said. "We do have water available, and our drinking fountains and everything. While they're here, they can use our internet terminals or read our books or magazines or newspapers." If you are planning to be outside, stay hydrated.

"Make sure you're staying hydrated. You know, stay in the shade if it's too warm," Tyler Leamer, a State Parks Officer and Lifeguard, advised. "From the lifeguard side of things, we're just advising when you do see that kind of swell progression and it getting bigger, just know your limitations and, you know, don't go out too far."

The National Weather Service recommends people drink plenty of fluids, not leave children and pets unattended in vehicles, and reschedule strenuous activities to early morning or evening.

The heat advisory is in effect in Santa Cruz until 11 Thursday evening.

Link to story: <https://www.ksbw.com/article/coastal-areas-surprisingly-hot-as-heat-wave-sweeps-santa-cruz-county/62492801>



October 3, 2024: Cooling centers stay open through Central Coast heat wave

By Austin Castro

(KION-TV) - As many parts of the Central Coast battle excessive heat alerts to start the month of October, county governments are opening new and existing cooling centers to help people beat the heat and stay safe.

Here are a list of all the available cooling centers for each of the Central Coast counties:

Monterey County

- San Lucas Library, 54692 Teresa St.
 - Tuesday, Oct 1: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
 - Wednesday, Oct 2: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
- King City Library, 402 Broadway St.
 - Tuesday, Oct 1: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
 - Wednesday, Oct 2: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
- Soledad Community Center, 560 Walker Dr.
 - Monday -- Friday, Sept. 30 - Oct. 4: 6 a.m. - 9 p.m.
 - Saturday, Oct. 5: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.*
 - Sunday: TBD*

**If temperatures drop below 95-degrees, the cooling center will no longer be open.*

San Benito County

- San Benito County Free Library, 470 5th St., Hollister
 - Monday, Sep 30 - Wednesday, Oct 2: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- San Juan Bautista Library, 801 2nd St.
 - Monday, Sep 30 - Wednesday, Oct 2: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Santa Cruz County

Santa Cruz County is urging those who need a place to cool off to visit local libraries or other public buildings. You can find a full list of Santa Cruz Public Libraries and their hours [here](#).

Link to story: <https://kion546.com/news/2024/10/01/cooling-centers-open-up-on-central-coast-amid-excessive-heat-alerts/>

Santa Cruz Sentinel

October 4, 2024: Nonviolence center hosting conversation with author, former Oakland youth poet laureate



By Nick Sestanovich

SANTA CRUZ — SANTA CRUZ — Race and policing will be among the topics discussed when author Leila Mottley comes to the Resource Center for Nonviolence for a conversation with community activist Ayo Banjo and to discuss her novel “Nightcrawling” Oct. 19.

Mottley was born and raised in Oakland where she was named as the city’s youth poet laureate in 2018 when she was 16. Around the same time, she began writing what would become her debut novel “Nightcrawling,” the story of a 17-year-old girl named Kiara Johnson who lives with her brother in an East Oakland apartment complex. When her rent increases, and with her father dead and mother in rehab, she gets a job as a sex worker to make ends meet. Her life is further changed as she becomes a key witness in a scandal involving the Oakland Police Department.

The book, released in 2022, became a New York Times Best-Seller, an Oprah’s Book Club pick, was longlisted for a Booker Prize and was the recipient of a PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Literary Award.

In addition to "Nightcrawling," Mottley published her first poetry book, "woke up no light" in April, wrote a poem titled "Fire Season" that was published in the New York Times in 2020 and is set to release her second novel, "The Girls Who Grew Big," in 2025.

The conversation will be led by Banjo, the marketing director of the Resource Center for Nonviolence, UC Santa Cruz graduate who's served as the school's youngest student body president, former program director of Santa Cruz Black and also led the NAACP's Youth & College Division throughout California and Hawaii. His work has been featured in KQED, Good Times, CalMatters and other publications.

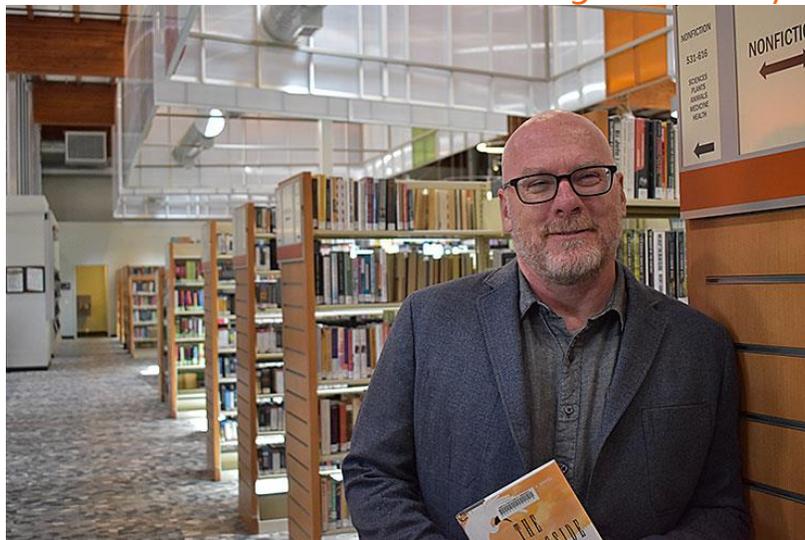
The event is held in partnership with Santa Cruz Public Libraries and is sponsored by Friends of the Capitola Branch Library, NAACP Santa Cruz and Santa Cruz Black.

The conversation is 2-3:30 p.m. Oct. 19 at the Resource Center for Nonviolence, 612 Ocean St., Santa Cruz. The event is free, but space is limited and registration is encouraged at [Santacruzpl.libcal.com/calendar/SCPL/leila](https://www.santacruzpl.libcal.com/calendar/SCPL/leila).

Link to story: <https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2024/10/03/nonviolence-center-hosting-conversation-with-author-former-oakland-youth-poet-laureate/>



October 23, 2024: Meet Christopher Platt Santa Cruz Public Libraries' New Director Going On County Tour



By Jondi Gumz

Santa Cruz Public Libraries Director Christopher Platt welcomes the community to informal meet and greet events at libraries throughout the county.

First up is Capitola Branch Library, 2005 Wharf Road, on Wednesday, Oct. 30. One week later on Thursday, Nov. 7, Platt visits the Scotts Valley Library, 251 Kings Village Road. Both meetings are from 4-5 p.m. These are part of a series of events Platt hopes to hold at every branch, to meet and connect with the community. The new library director wants to provide the public with an opportunity to learn about his experience leading libraries, to ask questions, and exchange insights about the important role Santa Cruz Public Libraries play in the community.

Dates at Aptos Library and La Selva Beach Library are to be announced.

Link to story: <https://tpgonlinedaily.com/category/our-town/capitola/>



November 1, 2024: Meet library director at Scotts Valley Library

Come meet new Santa Cruz Public Libraries Director Christopher Platt during an informal meet-and-greet event at the Scotts Valley Branch Library, 251 Kings Village Road, on Thursday, Nov. 7, from 4-5pm.

The event is part of a series of events that Platt hopes to hold at every branch, to meet and connect with the community. Platt wants to provide the public with an opportunity to learn about his experience leading libraries, to ask questions and exchange insights about the important role Santa Cruz Public Libraries play in the community.

Link to story: <https://pressbanner.com/news-briefs-published-nov-1-2024/>



December 12, 2024: Santa Cruz downtown library mixed-use project to break ground by June with \$100 million in state support

By Lookout Santa Cruz

The City of Santa Cruz said its downtown library mixed-use project will break ground before June after securing more than \$110 million in state funding and tax credits.

The project received \$55.1 million in state tax credits, along with \$55.6 million in bond money, city officials said Thursday. According to the terms of the tax credit, the city must start construction no later than June.

The mixed-use development is a partnership between the city and nonprofit developers Eden Housing and For The Future Housing. It will turn a city-owned parking lot bounded by Cathcart, Cedar and Lincoln streets, known as Lot 4, into a complex that includes 124 affordable housing units, a new 41,000-square-foot library, a child care center, commercial space and parking for 240 cars and 203 bikes.

The city said it also intends to plant 36 new trees to replace 12 that will be cut down during the construction. Of those, 14 will be planted on the site of the development and the rest at other locations in the city. The downtown farmers market, which has operated on the site for two decades, will be relocated to a new permanent location in downtown Santa Cruz, the city said.

The mixed-use library project faced significant opposition that culminated in a 2022 ballot initiative, Measure O, which sought to halt the project. Voters ultimately rejected the measure, allowing the development to proceed.

The library portion of the project will be paid for partly through funds from Measure S, a \$67 million bond measure passed in 2016 to rebuild or remodel 10 county libraries.

Link to story: <https://lookout.co/santa-cruz-downtown-library-mixed-use-project-to-break-ground-by-june-with-100-million-in-state-support/>

Santa Cruz Sentinel

December 13, 2024: Downtown Santa Cruz library project receives \$111 million to start construction

By Aric Sleeper

SANTA CRUZ — After years of delays, the new Downtown Branch of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries is slated to break ground next year, after the city of Santa Cruz staff and developers recently locked down about \$111 million in funding from the state.

The new Downtown Branch Library will be incorporated into an eight-story multi-use development project that includes a parking garage, commercial space and an apartment building, called the Downtown Library and Affordable Housing Project.

The approximately 85-foot-high structure will take up the city parking lot bound by Cedar Street, Lincoln Street and Cathcart Street, and is being developed through a partnership with the city and developers Eden Housing and For the Future Housing.

“This award represents more than a financial win for the project,” said Santa Cruz City Manager Matt Huffaker in a statement. “The funding signifies opportunity, security and hope in Downtown Santa Cruz for community members who have been impacted by the affordable housing crisis we’re experiencing.”

The approximately \$111 million in funding for the multi-use structure comes from a \$55.1 million tax credit recently awarded to the project through the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee and a bond of \$55.6 million from the California Debt Limit Allocation Committee.

According to the statement from the city, the tax credit award requires that construction begin on the structure by June 2025.

“Funders, led by the state of California, recognize the visionary and critical importance of this project for Santa Cruz,” said Eden Housing CEO Linda Mandolini in the statement. “We are thrilled to have the final piece of funding secured for the construction Phase 1 and look forward to collaborating with the City of Santa Cruz and our partners as we move toward breaking ground on this transformative development.”

The funding will supplement tax dollars the city was allotted nearly a decade ago through the ballot initiative known as Measure S. Passed in 2016, Measure S earmarked \$67 million to modernize, upgrade and repair local libraries in Santa Cruz County. Every branch of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries system has completed renovations or rebuilds using the Measure S funding, from Scotts Valley to Aptos, except for the Downtown Library Branch at 224 Church St.

In recent years, the project was put on hold with the formation of the citizen-led ballot initiative known as Measure O, which would have forced the city to renovate the existing library instead of constructing the multi-purpose project on the parking lot known as Lot 4. The passage of the initiative would have also made Lot 4 the permanent home of the Santa Cruz Downtown Farmers Market, but it ultimately failed in the November 2022 election and the multi-use library project was given the green light.

Staff from the city’s Economic Development Office, the lead agency in the development, gave an update on the project at the Santa Cruz City Council meeting in May. At the meeting, city staff reviewed the budget details for the project, which has two phases. Phase 1 has an estimated cost of about \$154 million with the affordable housing and child care component totaling about \$110 million. The library’s core and shell will cost an estimated \$22.1 million, the parking garage component will cost an estimated \$20.5 million and the core and shell for the commercial space will cost about \$1.3 million.

Because the eight-story building will encompass the entirety of the parking lot, city staff at the meeting also presented the new home of the market, which will consist of the parking lot known as Lot 16, next to the current downtown library branch, along with a portion of Church and Cedar streets, which would be closed to traffic during the market hours.

To replace the trees that will be cut down during the building's construction, the developers have committed to include 14 new trees on the project site and will plant 22 trees in other locations in Santa Cruz. According to the statement from the city, the "wood from existing trees on the site will be prioritized for potential use in the project."

In sum, the eight-story structure will contain the new, approximately 41,000-square-foot library, 124 housing units considered affordable by the state, a child care facility and about 9,600 square feet of commercial space. The parking garage will contain about 240 automobile spaces and about 200 spaces for bicycles.

For more project details, visit cityofsantacruz.com.

Link to story: <https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2024/12/13/downtown-santa-cruz-library-project-receives-111-million-to-start-construction/>

Santa Cruz Sentinel

December 18, 2024: SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARIES Applications open for youth poet laureate

BY NICK SESTANOVICH@SANTACRUZSENTINEL.COM

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY If you are a teen who sees things in a poetic way and has even transferred those poetic thoughts to pen and paper, or maybe even smartphones or laptops, you will have an opportunity come spring to serve as Santa Cruz County's youth poetry ambassador.

Santa Cruz County Public Libraries — in conjunction with Urban Word, Watsonville Public Library, Santa Cruz County Office of Education and Arts Council Santa Cruz County — has announced the opening of applications to serve as Santa Cruz County's second youth poet laureate. The position is open to county residents between the ages of 13 and 18 who are passionate about poetry, want to promote the art to the wider community, are willing to commit to a one-year term and live locally for the duration of the title.

After having a poet laureate position for 14 years, the county named Dina Lusztig Noyes — now a senior at Pacific Collegiate School — as the first youth poet laureate. Much like the adult position, the youth poet laureate is tasked with promoting the art of poetry throughout the county, whether through workshops,

civic functions or readings, while also encouraging their peers to take part in the art form. Being named youth poet laureate could also result in publication opportunities.

For those who want application tips, a series of workshops will be held throughout the county to guide aspiring youth poet laureates through the application process. The first is 4:30 p.m. Jan. 29 at the Watsonville Public Library, 275 Main St., Suite 100. This will be followed by a second workshop 4 p.m. Feb. 6 at the Aptos Branch Library, 7695 Soquel Drive. The third workshop is 4 p.m. Feb. 13 at the Downtown Branch Library, 224 Church St., Santa Cruz. The fourth and final workshop is 11 a.m. Feb. 22 at the Felton Branch Library, 6121 Gushee St.

The deadline to apply is March 1, and finalists will be announced March 31. The finalists will be celebrated and the youth poet laureate will be announced at 7 p.m. April 17 at the Samper Recital Hall at Cabrillo College, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos. All finalists will receive a \$100 cash honorarium, and the new youth poet laureate will receive a \$500 cash honorarium. The application can be accessed at [Sites.google.com/view/santa-cruz-youth-poet-laureate](https://sites.google.com/view/santa-cruz-youth-poet-laureate). For more information, email County Poet Laureate Farnaz Fatemi at sasqi@mac.com.

Link to story:

https://enewspaper.santacruzsentinel.com/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=Santa%20Cruz%20Sentinel&edid=a5c82323-9623-4251-a1e1-6e386580e4c8&pnum=1&utm_email=5411C46D659455521425E4212E&utm_source=listrak&utm_medium=email&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fedition.pagesuite.com%2flaunch.aspx%3feid%3da5c82323-9623-4251-a1e1-6e386580e4c8%26pnum%3d1&utm_campaign=bang-santa_cruz_sentinel-eNotify-nl&utm_content=eNotify

STAFF REPORT



DATE: January 13, 2024
TO: Library Advisory Commission
FROM: Christopher Platt
RE: Elect Chair and Vice Chair for 2025

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Library Advisory Commission needs to propose and vote upon candidates for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission.

DISCUSSION

See above.

Chair Mike Termini
Vice Chair Rena Dubin
Commissioner Tricia Wynne
Commissioner Charlotte Khandelwal
Commissioner Vivian Rogers
Commissioner Pamela Woll



STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 13, 2025
TO: Library Advisory Commission
FROM: Christopher Platt, Director of Libraries
RE: Updated Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Data Privacy Policy #303

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Endorse the Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Data Privacy Policy #303 for the Library Joint Powers Authority Board adoption.

DISCUSSION

The Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Data Privacy Policy #303 was last revised on June 6, 2019. Below are summarized changes to the policy:

Information We Keep About You: Incorporated additional document into policy. Library no longer ask for gender, driver's license numbers or expiration dates when registering for a library card.

Choice and Consent: The Library collects limited personal information for administrative purposes, such as creating statistical reports, marketing, and registering for programs. Often, photographs may be included in these reports. The updated policy states that patrons may be photographed during programs for promotional purposes, with staff notifying them through verbal alerts or signage. Parents/guardians may be asked to sign a release form for images of their children used in marketing or on social media platforms.

Links to Other Sites: Expanded statement and included Data Privacy Webpage link, "The Library's website contains links to other websites and uses third-party vendors to provide and connect to digital collections, streaming media content, databases, and more. Some of these sites and vendors may collect and share the information you provide to them in order to use their services. You can choose not to use these third-party vendors. The Library is not responsible for the privacy practices of these other sites or third-party vendors, which may differ from the privacy practices described in this policy. For more information regarding third-party vendors, please visit our Data Privacy webpage."

Lendable Technology: A new section was added regarding patron data privacy when using the Library's collection of Lendable Tech. Any device where personal information is entered, is equipped with an automated system to clear personal data.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENT

Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Data Privacy Policy #303

Report Prepared by: Jennifer Yeung, Management Analyst
Reviewed and Approved by: Christopher Platt, Director of Libraries



Confidentiality of Library Records and Patron Data Privacy Policy

JPAB Policy #303
Approved: 06/2019
Last Revised: 01/2025
Review Schedule: 12/2029

Santa Cruz Public Libraries (hereinafter the "Library") is dedicated to upholding the privacy and intellectual freedom of its patrons. We are committed to protecting your privacy by keeping your personally identifiable information confidential wherever feasible.

This policy outlines how the Library collects, uses, safeguards, and, when appropriate, discloses patron data, ensuring a balance between providing effective library services and maintaining a high standard of data privacy.

The Library complies with all sections of the State of California Public Records Act (including California Government Code Title 1, Division 10, Chapter 7 "Library Records and Similar Matters"). The Library respects the privacy of all patrons regarding the use of this Library system.

Unless otherwise stated herein, the Library shall not disclose any Library registration, circulation, requests for reference information, or internet use records of Library users to any person (except for a person acting within the scope of their duties within the administration of the Library), or to any local, state, or federal agency (except where required by law). The Library may also disclose such information for authorized law enforcement investigations in emergency circumstances or where required by law.

The Library adheres to the following best practices for securing patron data:

- Gather only the data considered necessary to perform the specific service.
- Retain the data only as long as necessary to provide the service.
- Limit access to the data to those who use it to perform their job duties.

PATRON REGISTRATION AND CIRCULATION RECORDS

The Library collects and retains information provided by its patrons from the registration form they complete when they register for a library card. This information includes:

- Name
- Mailing Address
- Telephone Numbers
- Birth Date
- Residence Address if different from Mailing Address
- School
- Full-time College Student (Yes/No)
- Email Address for Notices (Optional)

When paper forms are used for registration, the patron's information is then uploaded and retained electronically. Once the registration process is complete, the paper forms are destroyed.

The Library also collects and tracks patron circulation records electronically. This includes the number of items checked out. This information is used by the Library to track borrowed materials, manage the Library's collection, and plan for library services.

When an item is checked out, that item is recorded under the patron's Library card account in the Library's electronic system. However, when that Library material is returned, the record of that item is no longer retained under the patron's Library card account, except as needed for payment of fines or if patrons have opted in to maintaining their reading history. (Please note, the number of items checked out continues to be retained—no titles).

INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES

The Library collects limited personal information for the administration of library services. These administrative services include the creation of hold records, fine billing and collection, marketing and registration for library programs and services, and the creation of organizational statistical reports, including but not limited to the Library's circulation count, website visits, and WiFi usage.

In the case of unpaid fines, the Library keeps a record of the item number, the date the fine was incurred, and the amount of the fine. Once the fines are paid, the record of the returned item is deleted from the Library's electronic database. In the event that the fines on the account warrant a restitution, the Library may submit the request to a third-party collection agency with an emphasis on material recovery. A detailed record of the amount owed, payments, returns, dates, credit reported, and any updates to balances, addresses, or phone numbers will be provided to the third-party agency. This information is retained on the patron's Library card account even after the fine is cleared. Please note that the third-party collection agency's records retention policy may differ from the Library.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND STORED AUTOMATICALLY

When a patron visits the Library website or downloads information, certain information will be automatically gathered and stored electronically about the visit, including:

- The internet protocol address from which access to our website is gained.
- The type of browser and operating system used to access the Library's site.
- The date and time of access to the Library's site.
- The pages visited, for how long, and the address of the website from which the initial visit to www.santacruzpl.org was launched, if any.

The information collected does not identify individuals personally. The Library uses this information to help make its website more useful to visitors and to learn about the number of visitors to its site and the types of technology its visitors use.

For public use of the Library's on-site computers, the Library utilizes a computerized reservation system that requires patrons to log in with their Library card account number and password. Anyone, for any reason, may request a guest pass from Library staff to use an on-site computer. All on-site computers are equipped with automated systems that clear personal data after each new session, ensuring no electronic tracking of the workstation.

Credit card information provided for fines and fees or services processed through the

Library's website is used only for that intended purpose and is transmitted via encryption, to a credit card processor.

CHOICE AND CONSENT

Patrons may choose to provide additional data such as preserving their circulation records to maintain personal reading lists or receive reading suggestions. If a patron voluntarily chooses to provide additional information, this information will be retained by the Library pursuant to this policy.

The Library will not sell, license or disclose personal information to any third-party without patron consent, unless the Library is compelled to do so by law.

Additionally, patrons may be photographed during Library programs to be used for promotional purposes. Library staff and volunteers may inform patrons of this through verbal notifications or signage. Parents/guardians may be asked to sign a release form for images or portraits of their child taken during program participation if the Library intends to use these images in marketing materials or on social media platforms.

LINKS TO OTHER SITES

The Library's website contains links to other websites and uses third-party vendors to provide and connect to digital collections, streaming media content, databases, and more. Some of these sites and vendors may collect and share the information you provide to them in order to use their services. You can choose not to use these third-party vendors. The Library is not responsible for the privacy practices of these other sites or third-party vendors, which may differ from the privacy practices described in this policy. For more information regarding third-party vendors, please visit our [Data Privacy](#) webpage.

NETWORK SECURITY

For network security purposes and to ensure that the Library networks and internet services remain available to all users, the Library uses software programs to monitor network traffic and identify unauthorized attempts to upload or alter information, or otherwise cause damage to the Library network. If such monitoring reveals evidence of possible abuse, violation of Library policies, or criminal activity, system personnel may provide the results of such monitoring to appropriate officials or authorities. The Library does not attempt to identify individual users or their usage habits; however, the Library recognizes that it may be compelled to identify such information, or disclose it in the context of an authorized law enforcement investigation or prosecution.

Unauthorized attempts to upload information or alter information on this service are strictly prohibited and may be punishable under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986 and 18 U.S.C. Section 1030.

LENDABLE TECHNOLOGY

The Library has a collection of lendable technology devices that can be checked out using a patron's Library card account and used either in the Library or at home. Any device where personal information is entered, such as a laptop, is equipped with an automated system to clear personal data. Patrons should also take steps to protect their personal data when using these devices and refer to the provided instruction manual. The Library will not retain any personally identifiable information shared in connection with lendable technology. For more information, please visit our [Lendable Technology](#) webpage.

SECURITY MEASURES

Security measures involve both managerial and technical policies and procedures to protect against the loss and the unauthorized access, destruction, use, or disclosure of data. Managerial measures include internal organizational procedures that limit access to data and ensure that those individuals with access do not utilize the data for unauthorized purposes. Technical security measures to prevent unauthorized access including encryption for the transmission and storage of data, limits on access through use of passwords, and storage of data on secure servers or computers to protect against unauthorized access.

The Library permits only authorized Library staff with assigned confidential passwords to access personal data stored in the Library's computer system for the purpose of performing work related to the administration of the Library.

UPDATES AND NOTICE

The Library strives to keep Library users informed of the policies governing the collection and retention of personally identifiable information, as well as the reasons for which the information is needed to provide library services. The Library reserves the right to change or modify this privacy statement at any time, and in its sole discretion. If the Library revises this policy, the changes will be posted on the Library's homepage.

Should Library users have questions, concerns, or feedback about the Library's handling of their private information, they may submit written correspondence to the Santa Cruz Public Libraries Administration Office, addressed to the Director of Libraries.



SANTA CRUZ
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Proposal for Event and Brand Promotion Merchandise

10.02.2024

Ana Maria Treadwell
Marketing Department
Community Relations Specialist

Overview

After reviewing current practices for distribution of merchandise at events, and previous systems in place for the same end, it has become clear that there is a great need to set clear standards and procedures to meet the need of marketing our brand, while engaging with patrons and potential patrons during community events. There is also a need to develop definitions for what stands as *Community Engagement* and *Outreach* within the library marketing context, as the two concepts have been used interchangeably. In this proposal, the marketing department will focus on how under those definitions, we can better serve the community, amplify our brand and engage more patrons, particularly those segmented as non-users. At the core of this plan lies the crucial role that libraries play in our community and our desire to have current patrons and would-be patrons visit our branches and participate in our programs, learn more about our services and how they can leverage them. Our staff presence at events is our strongest asset and marketing tool, so empowering staff with the right tools will enable them to engage with patrons, bring new patrons through our doors, and amplify our message and brand.

Definitions

For the purposes of this proposal, the following definitions are stated in hopes to delineate the role of the marketing department within SCPL to support programs and services:

1. Outreach

In libraries, outreach is often described as services for those who are infrequent users or nonusers or as services for those who are traditionally underserved. Outreach librarians strive to provide equitable delivery of library services to all people through the development of programs, policies, practices, and behaviors which make the library available to all people. *American Library Association (ALA)*

2. Community Engagement

Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with community members — be they library customers, residents, faculty, students or partner organizations— to address issues for the betterment of the community. *American Library Association (ALA)*

3. Marketing

Marketing is the implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the

organization's offering in terms of the target markets' needs and desires and on using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and service the market. - Definition by Philip Kotler. Koontz, Christine. *Customer Based Marketing*, a column for *Marketing Library Services*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2001- Present.

Background

Through a general assessment, it appears that historically, a solid strategy for purchasing and distributing branded merchandise has not existed. SCPL has allocated funds in its budget for the purchase of promotional items, but these items have not been purchased strategically, and rather, were purchased without a rationale to fulfill a merchandising need and distributed at tabling events. Upon my arrival in October 2023, I received several requests to purchase promotional items ('swag') from programs for tabling events, but there were no clear parameters or rationales as to what should be ordered. The thought of a well-developed strategy with rationales, and involving a more eco-conscious approach was sparked by a rubric shared by a colleague that addressed the needs for libraries to be more sustainable when it comes to choosing merchandise for brand promotion. This document also brought to the forefront the question about the cost of this merchandise, both fiscal and environmental, which transformed into the question of how we can make our brand marketing effective, while being conscious about the environment and fiscally responsible in support of the public greater good.

Event Kits (fka Outreach Kits)

The former Community Relations Specialist had implemented the use of "Outreach Kits" for each branch to have materials at hand when attending community events. Each kit included informational and promotional materials that would support staff while tabling at events such as rack cards and swag. These kits were to be replenished with swag on demand, as staff would attend tabling events. With their departure, there was an outstanding request from the Youth Programs and Services Manager to furnish prize wheels for these kits, as part of the tabling engagement strategy. The prize wheels would serve to attract attendees and for the distribution of promotional items.

Promotional Items

Given that these promotional items were to be replenished on demand, this posed the need to consistently stock up on merchandise for distribution at events. Many of these items, ordered in large quantities, were not being used. Upon my arrival, I learned that the previous Community Relations Specialist had ordered hundreds of plastic, branded license plate covers that did not have a specific purpose in mind. I repurposed these items by sharing them with the Downtown Association as part of a welcome campaign for new



Downtown residents in April 2024. In a similar fashion, hundreds of plastic, branded sunglasses were ordered for the Summer Reading Program 2023. At the start of Summer Reading Program 2024, there were hundreds of sunglasses left that were repurposed during two events, the SRP kick-off at Aptos and Branch Out event at Felton.

It is worth noting that there was a request for more sunglasses to be ordered for 2024 SRP, but I did not order them, as I could not justify the rationale to do so. Firstly, we were stocked, and secondly, these items were plastic, non-renewable items that would end up in a landfill. Lastly, the theme for the program in 2024 was “Read, Renew, Repeat” with an emphasis on reducing waste and helping the environment. It would have been a bad marketing call to promote an environmental message with non-renewable, plastic items that would end up in the landfill.

Engagement With Purpose

Although promotional items do serve the purpose of brand recognition and engagement, a strategy needs to be developed to both advance our brand, while directly engaging with the public. The purpose of going out in the community is to engage potential users, strengthen our relationship with current users, and share information about our programs and services, rather than giving away a branded memento that may be soon forgotten or discarded. This last thought is at the heart of what this proposal aims to accomplish. Receiving a branded product would be a prize for the time spent talking with the representatives of the library, leveraging that connection to entice participants to come to our branches, exchange information about our programs and services and leave the piece of merchandise distribution to a strike of luck for attendees, rather than a guaranteed gift.

A Better Solution

For this end, SCPL has acquired three prize spin wheels, in addition to an existing one, previously used at tabling events. While the prize wheel was previously used to give away merchandise, under this proposal, it would be used as a tool for engagement. Each spin wheel will come loaded with questions and activities around our programs and services, all this to serve as engagement and as an opportunity to inform users and would-be users of SCPL program and services offer. There would be low-level, mid-level, and high-level prizes, which would be branded items and merchandise, and getting one would be the exception, not the rule.

Goals

1. Establish a branding strategy that serves the purpose of promotion, connection and engagement while keeping the environment and budget in mind. This aligns with SCPL’s Strategic Plan, Goal A, Create and support safe and friendly places, Objective

(E) Ensure that the Library remains a leader in the County for environmental sustainability: Develop a plan by 2024 to reduce the carbon footprint by half by 2026.

- a. This proposal only addresses a small part of the plan, a global plan looking at all the aspects of the Library's carbon footprint must be developed, if it has not already been developed
 - b. Collaboration with the City of Santa Cruz Sustainability and Resiliency Office would help with guidance and provide parameters for purchase of sustainable merchandise
 - c. The creation of an SCPL Sustainability Committee would support this and other efforts
2. Set the marketing and promotional strategy as a tool for patron and community engagement.
 - a. Introduce the plan to staff that regularly participate in community events and tables at events
 - b. Share the rationale for this new plan and highlight its environmental benefit while it establishes our brand as eco-responsible in the community.
 3. Amplify SCPLs brand and messaging through meaningful interactions with the public at events

Milestones

1. Merchandise Items Categorization

Define which items are low-level, mid-level, and high-level. Look for vendors that sell items as described in [this rubric](#). Low level items such as branded stickers can be given for participating. Stickers should meet some criteria that make them sustainable, such as made from recycled or biodegradable materials. Mid-level and High-level would be reserved for the 'Lucky' category on the spin wheel.

2. Define Events

A list of events where an SCPL presence is expected would help the marketing department in assessing the target audience at the event and the quantities of items to be purchased or brought to the event. Having a schedule of programs and events librarians plan to attend would be beneficial to assess quantities to be purchased and distributed to events.

3. Distribution Strategy

A sound distribution strategy is necessary, to gauge inventories of merchandise and type of merchandise. This relates to the existing Event Kits that each branch has, for the purpose of attending events in the community.

4. Pilot Program at an event - Gather reception from the public

The plan outlined in this proposal could begin as a pilot program, to be tested at an event or two, where staff would gather input from the public and gauge the level of engagement to see if it would be viable. Iterations based on feedback from the events would guide changes or improvements.

5. Implementation

If the program is well-received and the feedback gathered proves that the program is successful, it can be implemented for our strategy as SCPL goes out into the community.

Prize Wheel Topics

-Jumping Jacks, touch your head and stomach four times while saying "I love my Library"

-Pose like a superhero and say "I love my Library!"

-Name one thing you can do with a Library card

-Library of Things True or False : is it true that you can ___ with a library card? Is it true you can borrow a telescope? Is it true you can borrow an induction cooktop? STEM Kit, etc.

-Favorite book

-Favorite children's book

-Favorite book character

- "Lucky" Prizes:

- Small prize (Low-level merch)
- Medium prize (Mid-level merch)
- Big prize (High-level merch)

Merch Levels

Low-Level

- Stickers
- Pens (Recyclable)

- 
- Pencils
 - Sticky notes
 - Plantable bookmarks

Mid- Level

- Totes
- Sunglasses (Wheat Straw)
- Pins

High-level

- Mugs
- T-shirts
- Reusable water bottle

STAFF REPORT



DATE: January 13, 2024
TO: Library Advisory Commission
FROM: Christopher Platt
RE: Libraries & Well-Being: A Case Study from The New York Public Library

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Informational only. No action needed.

DISCUSSION

This white paper, released nationally in November of 2024, presents results of a study conducted by the Humanities and Human Flourishing Project within The University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center and The New York Public Library. It intends to answer this question: "do patrons perceive that their use of the Library positively impacts their well-being? If so, in which ways?" By surveying the users of one of the largest and most diverse public library systems in the nation, the results of this study can be relevant to public libraries everywhere. I include it here because its key takeaways reinforce with survey data what many of us know instinctually:

- Libraries create a foundation for well-being
- Libraries foster the core elements of well-being
- Libraries promote personal development beyond well-being
- The positive impact of libraries on well-being is highest for patrons living in lower income communities
- This positive contribution to well-being is also higher for patrons with more physical and time-intensive library usage
- These findings demonstrate that public libraries support the flourishing of their patrons-and thereby help strengthen their communities.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

ATTACHMENTS

Libraries & Well-Being: A Case Study from The New York Public Library

Libraries & Well-Being

**A Case Study from
The New York Public Library**

2024



New York
Public
Library



“Public libraries—those enduring and adaptive positive institutions—provide us with information, inspiration, and connection for staying resilient in adversity and for imagining and creating more fulfilling lives and thriving communities. This report helps us see and relate to libraries as important resources for, and centers of, flourishing.”

—Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman

Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology and Founding Director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania

Welcome

November
2024

The white paper you're about to read is a contribution to positive psychology, a field studying the traits, experiences, and institutions enabling individuals and communities to thrive. It is the result of an evolving partnership between The New York Public Library's Strategy and Public Impact team and the Humanities and Human Flourishing Project within The University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center.

Our two teams—situated within the largest public library system in the country, and a center established by the founder of positive psychology, Dr. Martin Seligman—share an interest in exploring the ways public and cultural institutions contribute to individual well-being and support flourishing communities. Our collaboration focuses on illuminating a new dimension in the study of well-being—namely, the positive impact of public libraries on individual and collective flourishing.

NYPL regularly surveys its patrons to understand and improve how the Library fits into—and adds value to—their lives. We strive to identify the unique power of public libraries, pinpointing precise mechanisms of positive impact, so that we can preserve and strengthen that impact. When designing our latest system-wide patron survey, we were inspired by Dr. Seligman's book *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* to incorporate measures of well-being into our questions to capture a unique type of impact that has been rarely measured in library spaces before.

This inspiration was guided by the overarching research question: do patrons perceive that their use of the Library positively impacts their well-being? If so, in which ways?

Patrons responding to NYPL's system-wide survey overwhelmingly self-reported that the Library did, indeed, have a positive impact on their well-being. Dr. Seligman's PERMA model posits five building blocks of well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Patrons' responses to structured and open-ended survey questions pointed to a Library impact that spans all five PERMA dimensions to improve their professional, academic, and personal lives. Further, respondents highlighted important aspects of public space that can engender PERMA experiences and support flourishing through personal transformation.

Continued

The Humanities and Human Flourishing Project provided expert guidance in validating and contextualizing these survey results. This marked the beginning of our working relationship, the first product of which is this white paper outlining public libraries' relevance to positive psychology and providing evidence that public libraries serve as centers of well-being within their communities.

We look forward to continuing this collaboration in the future, conducting research together that will further illuminate the role of public libraries in the promotion of the well-being of individuals and communities across the country.

In the meantime, we hope you'll be informed and inspired by the encouraging findings outlined in this report.

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THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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This report is presented in partnership by The New York Public Library Strategy and Public Impact team and the Humanities and Human Flourishing Project at the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania as part of an ongoing collaboration to study and advocate for the role of public libraries within the communities they serve. To learn more, visit: nypl.org/wellbeing

Special Thanks: The authors would like to thank two additional members of NYPL's Strategy and Public Impact team for their substantive contributions to this work. Dr. Katarzyna Kowalska advised on survey construction, fielding methodology, and conceptual analysis, and Dr. Ricardo Rivera led patron focus groups and qualitative analysis of free-text responses. Additional thanks to NYPL's Creative Services team for their support in the production of this report.

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Libraries & Well-Being

Summary & Key Takeaways

Findings from a 2023 survey of NYPL patrons show that the vast majority of responding patrons report that the Library positively contributes to their well-being. Our analysis of survey results, informed by positive psychology's PERMA model of well-being, indicates that this impact occurs across three stages of flourishing, comprising 20 factors of benefit.

1 Libraries create a foundation for well-being.

Library spaces and resources provide the preconditions necessary for well-being to occur. NYPL patrons report that Library spaces, services, and materials provide them with a sense of **stability, safety, refuge, and peace**, and allow them to **escape** and **focus**.

92% of respondents reported feeling somewhat to very "calm/peaceful" after visiting the Library, resulting in an overall **76%** indexed calmness rating.

2 Libraries foster the core elements of well-being.

These preconditions activate the elements of positive psychology's PERMA framework of well-being—Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. NYPL patrons report that their Library usage:

- Generates the positive emotions of **comfort** and **joy**
- Promotes their engagement with the world, through **discovery, inspiration, and enrichment**
- Fosters relatedness, by providing **connection, care, and support**
- Helps them find meaning, via **knowledge, reflection, and purpose**
- Facilitates their accomplishments by supporting their **productivity**

74% of respondents reported that their Library use positively affects how equipped they feel to cope with the world.

90% of respondents reported that their Library use positively affects how much they love to learn new things.

3 Libraries promote personal development beyond well-being.

These preconditions and components of well-being combine to produce the fruits of flourishing: NYPL patrons report that their Library usage supports their **growth** and **expansion**.

88% of respondents reported that their Library use has supported their personal growth.

Continued

Further analysis demonstrates impact based on socioeconomic status and patterns of library use. While this report directly draws upon the experiences of NYPL patrons, it presents a theoretical model of how and in which ways libraries impact well-being—which is likely relevant to libraries across the nation.

4 The positive impact of libraries on well-being is highest for patrons living in lower income communities.

While surveyed patrons across all demographic segments self-reported Library impact on their well-being, the degree of impact was inversely related to neighborhood income levels.

73% of respondents living in lower-income ZIPs reported that their Library use positively affects their “feeling that there are people in their lives who really care about them,” versus **48%** in higher-income ZIPs.

5 This positive contribution to well-being is also higher for patrons with more physical and time-intensive library usage.

While surveyed patrons across all usage types self-reported NYPL’s positive impact on their well-being, patrons who spent time in the Library’s spaces and attended programs reported consistently higher impact than e-only users.

82% of space users and **79%** of program attendees report that their use of the Library positively affects how optimistic they are about the future, versus **58%** of e-only users.

6 These findings demonstrate that public libraries support the flourishing of their patrons—and thereby help strengthen their communities.

This evidence argues for public libraries, including NYPL, to be on the map, and at the table, for community discussions about individual and collective well-being.

Overall, **80%** of respondents reported that their Library use had a big positive impact on at least one element of their well-being.

Libraries & Well-Being

20 Factors of Patron Well-Being Experienced Across 3 Stages

1 Libraries Create a Foundation for Well-Being

Stability	Safety	Refuge
Escape	Peace	Focus

2 Libraries Foster the Core Elements of Well-Being

POSITIVE EMOTION	ENGAGEMENT	RELATIONSHIPS	MEANING	ACCOMPLISHMENT
Comfort	Discovery	Connection	Knowledge	Productivity
Joy	Inspiration	Care	Reflection	
	Enrichment	Support	Purpose	

3 Libraries Promote Personal Development Beyond Well-Being

Expansion	Growth
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Introduction

In our divided, unequal, and commercialized society, libraries stand out as among the last truly public institutions. Providing access without financial, social, or physical barriers, public libraries make a unique contribution to promoting individual and collective flourishing throughout the communities they serve. Until recently, empirical work measuring the impact of public libraries on well-being has been sparse; this new partnership between The New York Public Library and the University of Pennsylvania marks the beginning of a thread of work investigating psychological well-being within the context of public libraries.

This paper sets out to establish a relationship between public libraries and the well-being of library patrons. By aligning with positive psychology and positive humanities research delineating the relationship between public cultural institutions and flourishing—and drawing connections to parallel concepts from prior research on the impact of public libraries on community building, social and cultural capital, and civic engagement—we construct an empirically testable relationship between library use and individual well-being, with important implications for collective flourishing.

In November and December 2023, The New York Public Library designed and fielded a comprehensive, system-wide survey of its patrons. One of the survey's goals was to test the hypothesis that the Library has a positive impact on its patrons' well-being. To meet this goal, we adapted well-being measures developed, validated, and used by researchers in the field of positive psychology for our survey. The survey included quantitative indicators assessing patrons' perceptions of the Library's impact on their well-being, along with open-ended questions asking patrons to qualitatively describe the Library's role in, and contribution to, their lives. We supplemented our survey with targeted focus groups to explore these questions in synchronous, in-depth discussions.

In this report, we combine our quantitative and qualitative analyses of this survey and its supplementary focus

groups into an articulation of NYPL's positive contributions to its patrons' well-being. Specifically, we delineate three main stages through which the Library supports the flourishing of its patrons:

- First, Library spaces and resources provide the **preconditions necessary** for flourishing to occur.
- Second, these preconditions activate the elements of positive psychology's **PERMA framework** of well-being.
- Third, these preconditions and components of well-being combine to produce the fruits of flourishing: **growth and expansion**.

This paper begins by presenting a theoretical framework for flourishing, drawing upon Dr. Martin Seligman's seminal work in positive psychology alongside Dr. James Pawelski and Dr. Katherine Cotter's contributions to the field of the positive humanities. It then presents the methodology for, and findings of, the NYPL patron survey, proceeding through the three pathways through which the Library positively impacts the flourishing of its patrons.

Theoretical Framework

We understand flourishing as a broad term that involves both well-being and ill-being. Psychologically, well-being involves the cultivation and preservation of positive conditions (e.g., belonging, purpose in life), experiences (e.g., achieving mastery), and states (e.g., positive emotions). Conversely, ill-being involves the presence of negative conditions (e.g., loneliness, lack of meaning), experiences (e.g., trauma), and states (e.g., anxiety, depression). Flourishing occurs when an individual experiences relatively high levels of well-being and relatively low levels of ill-being (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

Of course, well-being and ill-being do not exist in isolation from one another. Individuals with high well-being are less likely to have high ill-being, and vice

versa. With that said, however, this likelihood is less strong than might be expected, and the connection between them is actually rather weak (Keyes, 2002, 2007). So it is not impossible for an individual to experience both high well-being and high ill-being. For that reason, we cannot simply take these two components to be the opposites of each other; instead, we need to study each component on its own to assess overall levels of flourishing. Further, it can be helpful to consider a comprehensive profile to identify positive factors that promote and preserve well-being or mitigate and prevent ill-being, and negative factors that aggravate and entrench ill-being or destroy and obstruct well-being (Pawelski, 2016). Although mainstream psychology has focused largely on the mitigation of ill-being, the examination of well-being has become more common in recent years thanks largely to the field of positive psychology, and understanding well-being in and of itself is now recognized as an important endeavor.

Here we focus on psychological well-being through the perspective of positive psychology. Although recent years have seen the examination of a range of well-being outcomes within the field of positive psychology, a dominant theoretical model remains the PERMA framework (Seligman, 2011) that delineates five core components making up well-being:

- The experience of **positive emotions**, such as happiness and contentment (Fredrickson, 2001)
- Feelings of **engagement** in one's life and broader society (Seligman, 2011)
- The cultivation of positive **relationships** and feelings of belonging (Forgeard et al., 2011; Reis & Gable, 2003)
- Finding **meaning** in oneself and one's life (King & Napa, 1998)
- The experience of **accomplishment** and capability (Sen, 1993).

Other work within positive psychology and related fields has identified additional salient well-being factors, including having interesting and perspective-changing experiences (Oishi & Westgate, 2022), experiencing autonomy and agency (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 1998), using one's signature strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), developing one's character

(Kristjánsson, 2015), and having transcendent experiences, such as experiences of awe (Keltner, 2023).

Much of positive psychology research has focused on individual experiences of well-being (e.g., happiness, life satisfaction) or on individual traits (e.g., character strengths, virtue), but a third pillar focuses on positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Fields such as positive organizational scholarship (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012) and systems informed positive psychology (Kern et al., 2020) go beyond a focus on the individual. Within this third pillar, investment in civic institutions meant for use by the public has been positioned as a necessary foundation for increasing well-being throughout society (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Dalmer et al., 2022; Klinenberg, 2018).

Aligned with positive psychology is the new field of the positive humanities. The positive humanities are an interdisciplinary field of academic scholarship, scientific research, and creative practice concerned with the relationship between culture and flourishing (Pawelski, 2022). This field integrates the scientific study of well-being with approaches and perspectives used within the arts and humanities for a more comprehensive approach to flourishing. Both scientific (e.g., Shim et al., 2019, 2021) and humanistic (e.g., Proctor, 1998; Small, 2014; Felski, 2020) scholarship has documented the flourishing benefits of engaging with the arts and humanities. A growing body of research has examined the flourishing benefits of a variety of arts and humanities activities, and an area of research particularly relevant for libraries has focused on museums.

Museums, and especially art museums, have been the sites of the first wave of empirical work asking whether experiences in public institutions can have an impact on flourishing, what forms this impact may take, and the mechanisms underlying the impact (see Cotter & Pawelski, 2022 for review). Research has found that art museum visitation and engagement is associated with beneficial outcomes connected to the PERMA model (e.g., increased positive emotion, Camic et al., 2016; Thomson et al., 2018; enhanced connections and relationships, Herron & Jamieson, 2020; Roberts et al., 2011). But research has also shown benefits to areas of flourishing outside the PERMA framework, including improved mental health (D' Cunha et al., 2019; Fancourt

& Steptoe, 2018), reduced stress levels (Clow & Fredhoi, 2006; Grossi et al., 2019), enhanced senses of subjective health and well-being (D’Cunha et al., 2019; Grossi et al., 2019; Schall et al., 2018), and reflection on one’s place in the broader community and society (Smith, 2014; Waszkielewicz, 2006).

Further, art museums have undertaken a variety of initiatives and programs aimed toward supporting the flourishing of their audiences. Many of these programs have focused specifically on the needs of older adults and those with age-related medical conditions (e.g., dementia). Through these efforts, program participants have felt less isolated (Flatt et al., 2015; Roe et al., 2016; Rosenberg et al., 2009) and depressed (D’Cunha et al., 2019) and experienced greater emotional well-being (Camic et al., 2016; Rosenberg et al., 2009) and quality of life (D’Cunha et al., 2019; Thomson et al., 2018). This work suggests that, beyond the benefits of typical engagement, these institutions can intentionally increase the flourishing of their audiences through program conceptualization and implementation. Although both art museums and libraries are public institutions, less research of this kind has been conducted in the field of public libraries, even though they are often mentioned alongside museums as key public institutions in supporting flourishing (e.g., Pawelski, 2022).

Libraries differ from museums in ways that may suggest distinct, or additional, pathways to cultivating well-being in patrons. American public libraries have historically committed themselves to supporting the self-actualization of their community members through the provision of shared resources and opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge (Gangewere, 2011). Like art museums, public libraries offer engagement with cultural materials (such as books and multimedia offerings, cultural programs, and exhibits) and are spaces in which the community congregates. However, libraries are also free and welcoming third spaces for people of all social backgrounds to work, read, or relax. Public libraries offer programs and classes for all ages; provide opportunities for both direct and indirect civic engagement; and provide shared resources for public consumption in a non-commercialized context. Individuals are likely to visit public libraries on a more regular basis than art museums, integrate library visitation and resources into the pursuit of their life goals in multiple domains, and extend their library relationship beyond

the library’s walls by bringing its materials home with them, and engaging with them there.

Given these dynamics, the scale and nature of libraries’ contributions to their patrons’ well-being are likely to differ from those of art museums. In the research discussed in this paper, we apply this argument to The New York Public Library specifically, assessing the degree and qualities of the Library’s impact on well-being, as reported by responding patrons.

Data and Methods

In November and December 2023, The New York Public Library fielded a survey asking patrons about their: Library attitudes, behavior, and awareness; perception of Library impact on their well-being, and demographics. Survey distribution took two formats: an online survey accessible via the website and disseminated in Library newsletters, and a paper format, distributed via intercept strategy at select libraries across the NYPL system. The survey was available in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, and Bengali. In total, there were 2,401 respondents to the survey, 1,765 to the online format and 636 to the paper version. Only respondents who did not answer at least one of the independent and dependent variables were excluded from this analysis, resulting in an analytic sample of 1,974 respondents.

This report is a descriptive and theoretical analysis of the Library’s positive contribution to its patrons’ flourishing. Its theoretical and mechanistic arguments arise from a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative analysis of patron responses. The quantitative element derives from our analysis of responses to structured survey questions encompassing patrons’ perceived impact on stages of well-being and their emotional experiences after visiting physical Library locations. The qualitative element centers on our analysis of the survey’s open-ended, free-response question “How would your life be different without The New York Public Library?,” combined with our analysis of supplementary focus groups exploring patrons’ relationships with the Library in more depth. A more detailed discussion of the data and methods, including the descriptive characteristics of the analytic sample, can be found in the data and methods chapter at the end of this report.

1 Libraries Create a Foundation for Well-Being

Environmental Preconditions

The first stage to flourishing enabled by NYPL patrons' relationship with the Library involves qualities of Library spaces and resources that provide the necessary preconditions for well-being to occur. These preconditions, derived from our analysis of surveyed patrons' free-text responses, and covered in depth below, are: **stability, safety, refuge, escape, peace, and focus.**

Based on our survey findings, we argue that PERMA elements—for example, Engagement and Meaning—are more likely to be experienced within physical and psychological environments characterized by these preconditions. In their own words, patrons articulated that the Library is an environment unlike any other in the city: one uniquely equipped to activate elements of well-being and support the pursuit of their full potential, however they define that for themselves. It's easy to grasp the connections between:

- Positive emotions and an underlying sense of stability and safety, along with escape from negative experiences
- Engagement and a quiet, calm, and peaceful environment that allows for focus
- Relationships and a sense of refuge and home
- Meaning and stability
- Accomplishment and focus

Stability

When reflecting on the role the Library plays in their lives, respondents often rooted their statements in the idea that the Library's **stable**, enduring presence is something they can rely on. The reliability of the Library allowed the institution to become a large part of patrons' lives, both temporally—in terms of spending many hours a day there, over years of their lives—and emotionally. Patrons' ability to rely on the Library—to consider its presence as a non-negotiable, stable resource—allows them to navigate their city, and their lives, with assurance.

PATRON VOICES

“A touchstone for me”

“Just knowing it's there makes me feel better about my life in the city”

“A place to rely on”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Lost”

Safety

As a complement to the Library's institutional stability and reliability, respondents appreciated the **safety** of the Library. This safety was described as both objective, in that the Library spaces are themselves safe spaces, and subjective, in the feelings of safety and security they engender in patrons. In a city environment in which many people are always 'on' and scanning their environments, the Library's safety gives patrons the chance to fully relax and reduce vigilance.

PATRON VOICES

“A free space where we can...feel comfortable and safe”

“It feels safe here”

“The library provides a sense of security”

Refuge

As safe places reliably turned to in times of need, patrons describe how Library locations are seen as a **refuge**. Over time, respondents described how a reliably safe place to rest and recharge takes on the character of a **home**, providing the type of environment in which patrons can release and process their emotions, or simply feel as though they can fully exist as their true, authentic selves.

PATRON VOICES

“This is my safe haven”

“A home away from home”

“I get there and I feel like I am home”

“Space where I can just be me”

Escape

Respondents shared that the Library offered them a way to **escape** present circumstances, experiences, or emotions that may be associated with ill-being. This escape could be physical—escaping a difficult home life or the hectic nature of New York City by spending time in Library spaces—or emotional, using books or other media to transport them to other worlds. Using the Library in this way led to seeing the physical Library locations as a way to escape stress and anxiety.

PATRON VOICES

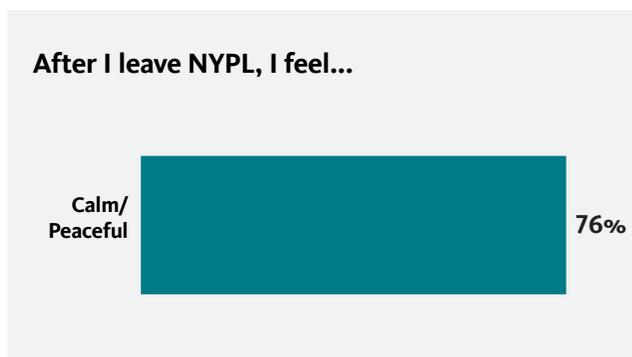
“Books transport me”

“Libraries are a good place...to escape to”

“Positive escape from day to day stress”

Peace

The survey included a structured question asking patrons about the extent to which they felt **calm** or **peaceful** after visiting the Library, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so). We operationalized this scale as a thermometer, whose maximum value of 100% would have been obtained if every single respondent said they felt very calm or peaceful after a Library visit. Patrons’ responses resulted in an overall calm/peaceful score of 76%, out of a total possible 100%.



In their free text responses, patrons described Library locations as spaces that are **quiet**, calm, peaceful, serene, and tranquil. These qualities of space allow patrons to feel less stressed, and more at ease and in balance, than in other locations in which their life unfolds.

PATRON VOICES

“I depend on the library for quiet time”

“Islands of calm, and I find balance within them”

“A place to go...to quiet the mind”

“Private and peaceful atmosphere”

Focus

The aspects of the Library’s built and social environment highlighted in this section—safety, reliability, peace, and intentional design of space to create distraction-free environments—facilitate patrons’ **focus** and concentration. Patrons reported highly valuing time spent in Library spaces because they make it easier for them to enter into a clear, calm mental state that lends itself to focusing attention on tasks, goals, and personal pursuits. The ability to focus is highly linked to two dimensions of PERMA that will be discussed in this report’s second chapter: Engagement and Accomplishment. Acting in combination, these qualities of Library spaces thus pave the way for experiences of PERMA.

PATRON VOICES

“Having the mental and physical space to study”

“Able to concentrate and focus on tasks”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Distracted”

CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

An underexplored area in the research on public institutions and flourishing is understanding the environmental preconditions that allow patrons to experience well-being. Just as plants cannot flourish without a supportive environment, it is important to note the physical and social environments that are conducive to human flourishing (Lomas et al., 2024). What is it about public libraries and museums that allow them to serve as a nourishing soil in which visitors can plant themselves and flourish?

To begin answering this question, we can turn to scholarship that considers which environmental qualities and conditions are conducive to flourishing. We can consider as one component the material environments and requirements for flourishing to occur (Maslow, 1954; Rao & Min, 2018), such as sufficient shelter, safety, or nutrition. But we can expand this consideration, as Rao and Min (2018) suggest, to also include, amongst other resources, access to information sufficient to engage civically within society, to public spaces that are free and flexible in their engagement pathways, and to education to promote the acquisition of knowledge. From such a material environment perspective, public libraries provide vital resources that support flourishing.

If we also consider some of the core psychological needs connected with flourishing, such as the needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000), we can examine the degree to which different environments are likely to meaningfully fulfill each of these needs. For instance, if we consider the need for autonomy within the public library environment, we can see how the varied resources, programs, and ways of engagement available could promote autonomous decisions regarding how to engage with these institutions. Competence can easily be linked with the missions of public libraries to provide a wealth of knowledge and resources to patrons through which they can feel better equipped to navigate life's challenges. Thus, we can consider both the material and intangible qualities of public library environments as necessary qualities in promoting flourishing in patrons.

Earlier work on the role of public libraries in society, and especially in their provision of public space, supports our argument that the combination of the built, social, and cultural environment of the public library creates the conditions under which flourishing can occur. Like public parks, public libraries are one of the few remaining third spaces in society where people can go to spend time without the expectation of spending money or defending their right to be present (Elmborg, 2011).

Prior research indicates that library environments can offer respite in a variety of social and built environments: in a dense urban environment, they may be places to decompress, while in a sparsely populated rural environment they may be places to feel part of a community and interact with others (Peterson, 2023; Sung, 2020; Svendsen, 2013). Across multiple life stages, the third space of the library serves special functions: for caregivers with small children to interact with other children, for teens and young adults to forge their identities, for working adults to further their careers, and for older adults with physical disabilities or fewer social connections to spend time in a social context (Cahill et al., 2020; Ziegler & Schwanen, 2011).

Lastly, the library extends beyond its own architecture by allowing its patrons to access, engage with, and bring into their homes, cultural materials and resources. Engagement with these resources creates opportunities for escape into different worlds and expansion into new modes of thought. In a broader sense, the institution of a public library can create feelings of trust in public institutions more generally, as users come to know they can rely on the library to fulfill their needs, increasing their belief that public assets truly exist for their benefit.

Prior research in anthropology, sociology, and library studies explains why third spaces such as those available in libraries are essential sites of respite in several social and cultural contexts and act as important spaces for individuals to exist.

“

Initially, it was like ‘okay I need to go here to focus and get work done.’ But now it plays the role of like, ‘This place gives me some balance from the hectic schedule of work, just to have a peaceful space to recalibrate and let go...’ It’s a necessity now.

2 Libraries Foster the Core Elements of Well-Being

The second stage of flourishing enabled by NYPL patrons' relationship with the Library occurs when the Library's environmental preconditions activate the elements of positive psychology's PERMA framework of well-being—Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—and generate a range of beneficial factors. NYPL patrons report that their Library usage:

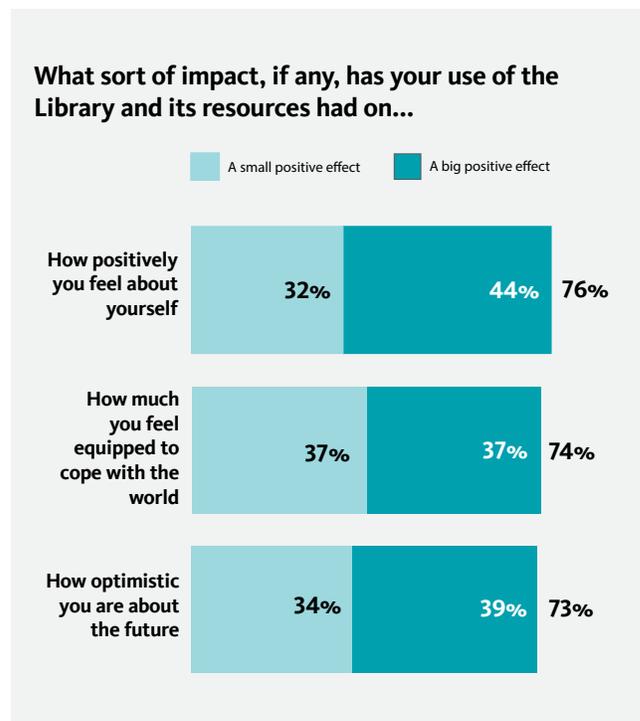
- Generates the positive emotions of **comfort** and **joy**
- Promotes their engagement with the world, through **discovery, inspiration, and enrichment**
- Fosters relatedness, by providing **connection, care, and support**
- Helps them find meaning, via **knowledge, reflection, and purpose**
- Facilitates their accomplishments by supporting their **productivity**

We begin this section by showing how respondents experience the five dimensions of PERMA through their Library relationship—both in their responses to structured survey questions asking respondents to reflect on how the Library makes them feel, has supported their specific goals in various areas of life, and has impacted stages of well-being, and in their own words from free-text responses and focus groups. We then delve into contextual research on the impact and value of libraries to explain exactly how NYPL, and libraries more broadly, may be having such an effect on our patrons.

Positive Emotion

The first pillar within the PERMA framework of well-being is the experience of Positive Emotion. Positive Emotion in itself is a broad concept, containing high-arousal states (e.g., happiness, joy), low-arousal states (e.g., contentment, serenity), and future-oriented positive feelings (e.g., optimism, hope). This category also includes the prevention and alleviation of negative emotional experiences to address ill-being alongside well-being.

Responses to our structured survey questions reflect NYPL's impact on patrons' experience of positive emotion in areas of self-esteem, ability to cope with stress, and optimism for the future. Over 70% of respondents felt that their use of the Library has had a big or small positive impact on measures of positive emotion adapted from positive psychology research: how positively they feel about themselves (76%), how much they feel equipped to cope with the world (74%), and how optimistic they are about the future (73%). More than a third of respondents perceived a big positive effect on all of these three items; the largest proportion (44%) for how positively they feel about themselves.



Respondents' free-text comments reinforced the finding that patrons view the Library as a place where they feel positive emotions, including high-energy positive feelings such as joy and pleasure, and lower-energy, reflective feelings, such as comfort and optimism for the future. Respondents also view the Library as a place to alleviate the experience of negative feelings or develop resources to cope with negative feelings.

Comfort

One way that respondents framed the Library’s impact on their emotions was as a source of **comfort** and **hope** in moments of uncertainty and stress. They described the Library as providing a sense of solace in difficult times or during destabilizing life transitions. They also noted that the Library helps them connect to a hopeful and empowered outlook on the future and their own agency in the world.

PATRON VOICES

“A balm for my mind and heart”

“It offers us hope that we can do something, that we can make a change, that we can advance”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Despairing”

“Stressed”

Joy

Respondents directly connected the Library to intensely positive emotions, such as **joy**, and its frequent companion, **pleasure**, and sustained **happiness**, which was so intrinsic to their Library experience that the place itself became imbued with positive feelings, literally becoming their “*happy place*.” Respondents looked forward to visiting the Library: a place filled with resources to enjoy and be entertained by, and an environment in which they can reliably enhance their mood or shift towards a more positive outlook on life.

PATRON VOICES

“One of my big joys for the day...bringing these bright spots into my life”

“My happy place”

“Things to enjoy”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

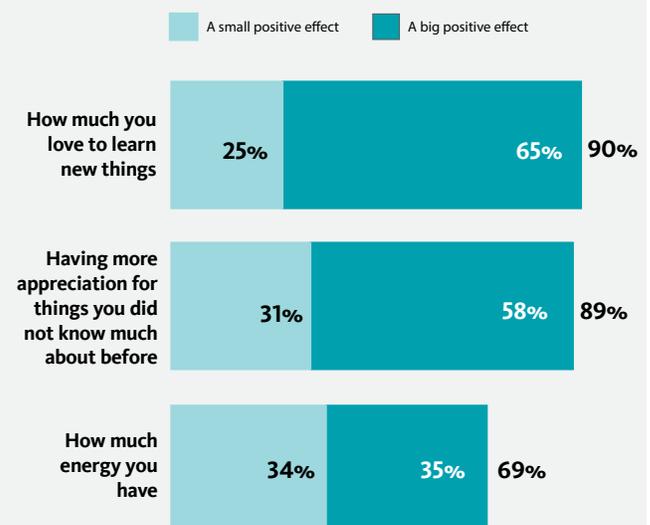
“Depressed”

Engagement

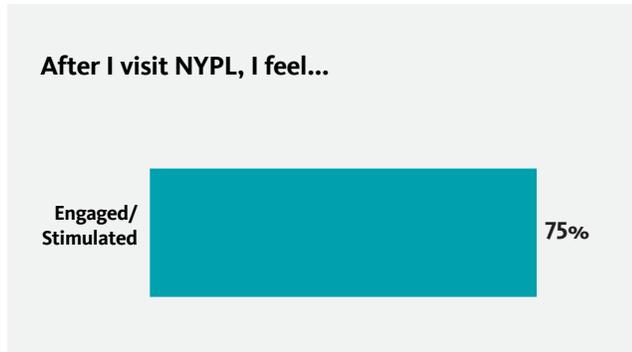
The second component of PERMA is Engagement. Engagement as a concept is similar to the idea of flow—a state in which one is fully occupied with the present moment, engaging with the task at hand.

Our structured questions measuring engagement focused on enjoyment of learning, satisfaction with gaining knowledge, and energy levels. Of all five dimensions of PERMA, the relationship between Library use and impact on engagement was the strongest. Ninety percent of respondents in the analytic sample felt that their use of the Library increased how much they love to learn new things, with 65% of the sample reporting the Library had a big positive effect and 24% a small positive effect. Only two percentage points lower, 88% of the analytic sample, reported the Library having a positive effect on appreciation for things they did not know much about before. Almost two-thirds of the analytic sample, 58%, felt their use of the Library had a big positive effect and 31% a small positive effect. Respondents were somewhat less likely to report the Library having a positive effect on how much energy they have, but still more than two-thirds of the respondents—69%—did feel the Library had an effect on this measure.

What sort of impact, if any, has your use of the Library and its resources had on...



We also asked respondents about the extent to which they felt engaged or stimulated after visiting the Library, on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so). We operationalized this scale as a thermometer, whose maximum value of 100% would have been obtained if every single respondent said they felt very engaged after a Library visit. Patrons' responses resulted in an overall engagement score of 75%, out of a total possible 100%.



In their free-text responses, patrons described the Library as supporting their engagement through three pathways: facilitating the discovery and exploration of their interests, providing inspiration and motivation, and creating enrichment in their lives. These pathways involved creating a newfound or enhanced enjoyment of learning, providing a sense of abundance of cultural materials to discover, inspiration from the Library's built and social environment, and helping patrons grow into their identities as readers and learners.

Discovery

Respondents felt that the Library afforded them a way to explore ideas deeply and broadly, via engagement with the Library's abundant free materials. A secondary way in which this concept was articulated was through developing their **interests** using the materials, space, and staff of the Library.

Respondents appreciated the Library's lack of financial limits to exploration, enabling them to make more adventurous decisions to explore new authors, genres, or topics, and allowing intensive exploration of many materials on a single topic, because they did not have to pay to acquire these resources. Further, patrons described how the ability to browse shelves in-person or the collection online could lead to the **discovery** of a new genre or subject of book the patron would not have found otherwise.

Patrons also noted that the Library foregrounds and fosters their identities as readers, and encourages and nurtures their pursuit of their curiosity. Respondents highlighted the role of the Library in their discovery of new ideas and topics, leading to the feeling of excitement and interest that comes from being stimulated intellectually.

PATRON VOICES

“Nurture my curiosity”

“Intellectual stimulation”

“My ability to engage in life”

“Foster my love for books and reading”

“Read more broadly...freely...passionate, incautious, prolific [reading]”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Boring”

“Apathetic”

“More expensive”

Inspiration

Respondents reported feeling **inspired** by the Library's spaces and **motivated** by engaging in their pursuits alongside other patrons who were also working, reading, or learning alongside them, even if they did not know each other or even interact during their Library visit. Beyond inspiration to explore or create, respondents also shared that the Library provided a more diffuse sense of inspiration to engage more deeply in life or the task at hand.

PATRON VOICES

“Inspired to live a full, informed, healthy life”

“Surrounded me with life's possibilities”

“Feel motivated to do work alongside people who need to do the same”

“Beautiful atmosphere of learning and reading”

Enrichment

The final way respondents wrote about the Library’s impact on engagement was through experiencing **enrichment** that adds color and vitality to their lives. In these responses, patrons highlighted the benefits they received from accessing the abundance of cultural resources provided freely by the Library. This enrichment was directly tied to a higher quality of life.

PATRON VOICES

“I deeply depend on the library for enrichment, and a higher quality of life”

“Colorful”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Diminished”

“Starved”

“Empty”

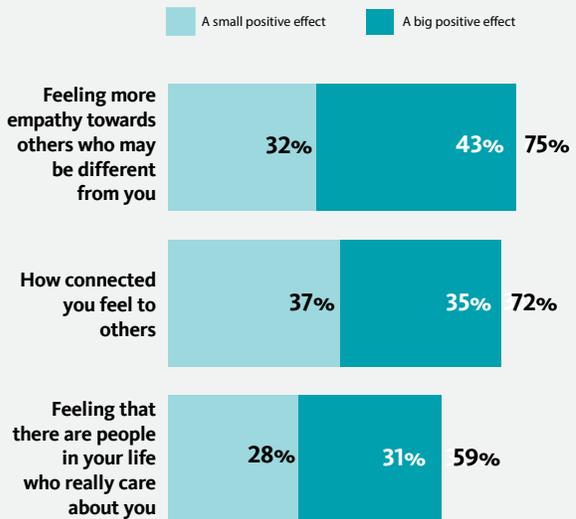
Relationships

PERMA’s third pillar of well-being is Relationships, focusing on the importance of social connection, a sense of belonging, and support from others in times of need.

The survey’s structured questions, adapted from measures validated by positive psychology, covered two strands within this domain. The first addressed relational benefits, asking patrons about feeling connected to and cared for by others. The second addressed the extension of relation to others by asking patrons about their empathy towards others who may be different from them.

Respondents were more likely to report the Library had an effect on the external-facing relational benefits, with 75% of respondents saying their use of the Library had a positive effect on feeling more empathy for others who may be different from them. The reception of relational benefits was slightly lower, with 72% of respondents reporting a positive effect on how connected they feel to others in their community. Fifty-nine percent of respondents reported that their Library use had a positive effect on feeling that there are people in their life

What sort of impact, if any, has your use of the Library and its resources had on...



who really care about them, which was the strongest statement pertaining to relational benefits. While this proportion is lower than the other two statements, still more than half of the analytic sample felt that their use of the Library had a small or big impact on feeling that others really care about them.

Two of our structured post-visit sentiment measures cover relational feelings arising from a Library visit: feeling like part of a community, and feeling seen and heard. Patrons reported experiencing both of these relational sentiments, with 70% of all possible points received for the former, and 66% for the latter.

After I visit NYPL, I feel...

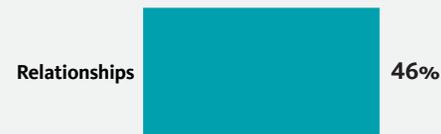


“

...love the vibe and aura of this place...brings so much energy and positivity in my everyday life and keeps me motivated to do better in my personal and professional life.

Respondents were also directly asked whether their use of Library resources supported them in their relationships. Forty-six percent of patrons in the analytic sample responded positively to this indicator. We see some of the most variation amongst respondent types for this measure, which we will explore in the Synthesis of Impact section.

Has the use of the Library's resources supported you in your...



In their free-text responses, patrons articulated the relationship and connection benefits received from The New York Public Library in three distinct ways: experiences of **connection**, receiving **care**, and finding **support** from Library staff.

Connection

Respondents described the Library as supporting their experience of a full spectrum of **connectedness**, and further, a sense of **community** that arises from the feelings of connection to others within a shared built environment. One end of that spectrum involves the connection and contact that arises from simply being in the presence of other community members—through existing alongside others in the same environment, participating in a program with others, or engaging with the same cultural object as others. The other end of this spectrum involves patrons deeply connecting to each other at the Library and, through the relationships they forge with each other, building enduring support systems for themselves.

Patrons acknowledged the Library's contribution to making them feel connected to their neighborhood, city, and world. They appreciated the Library's embodiment of welcome and inclusion, which creates an environment in which they can build their social skills by meeting and interacting with new people.

PATRON VOICES

“A place for such diverse neighbors to interact and form bonds”

“NYPL makes me feel connected to fellow New Yorkers and to my sense of home here”

“A real sense of community, bonding and belonging”

“Human contact”

“Created a support group”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Isolated”

“Distant”

“Cut off”

Care

A secondary relational benefit mentioned in patrons' free-text responses focused on the experience of relational emotions: the reception of **care** and **kindness** via the atmosphere of the Library, other patrons, and staff members. Some respondents articulated this as a sense of warmth and inclusion. Others spoke about an environment imbued with love and respect, and of feeling listened to by Library staff and other patrons.

PATRON VOICES

“We care about each other, and wish the best for our fellow citizens”

“Warm welcoming environment”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Colder”

“Exclusionary”

Support

A third relational benefit articulated by our respondents is the ability to rely on the help and assistance of Library staff, and to benefit from their knowledgeable guidance in navigating resources within the Library and beyond. Patrons shared that their lives would be more difficult without this **support**, which often came from receiving **help** from staff and other patrons. In a broader sense, NYPL was seen as a supportive institution patrons could rely on to feel equipped to pursue their goals and handle life's questions.

PATRON VOICES

“Help I trust”

“Myriad of ways that it can be there for me and provide support in my life”

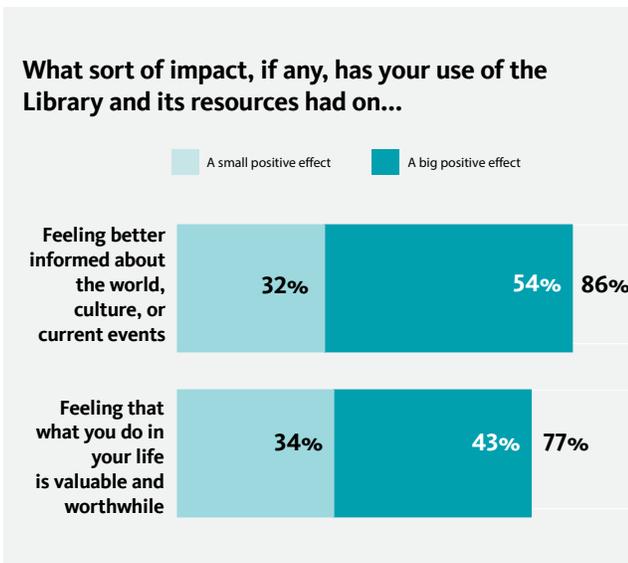
How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Difficult”

Meaning

The third dimension of PERMA is Meaning: feeling connected to a purpose for one's life, being part of—and informed about—something bigger than oneself, and having a sense that one is valuable and that one's actions are worthwhile.

The survey's structured questions addressed meaning by asking respondents whether their Library use supported their feeling informed about the world, and/or that their activities are valuable and worthwhile. Over three-quarters of the analytic sample felt their use of the Library had a positive effect on both, with 86% perceiving a positive effect on feeling better informed about the world, culture, or current events and 77% on feeling that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile. More than half of the analytic sample (54%) felt the Library has a big positive effect on feeling informed, and more than a third (43%) a big positive effect on feeling that what one does in one's life is valuable and worthwhile.



In their free-text responses, patrons described the Library adding meaning to their lives through supporting their pursuit of information and knowledge, providing dedicated space and time to reflect and introspect on their lives, and nurturing their sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Knowledge

As would be expected, respondents noted that Library resources supported their literacy throughout their lives, and connected them to **information, knowledge,** and current affairs in their neighborhood, city, and beyond. Respondents reported that through their use of the resources available at NYPL, they were able to gain an understanding of the world and how it works, accumulating knowledge and insight such that they felt “*enlightened*” and “*awakened*.” Access to knowledge regarding current affairs, history, and literature gave patrons a tangible route to answer their questions, feel informed, and learn about themselves. Respondents felt that without NYPL, they would be “*ignorant*” or “*naive*.” The Library provides its patrons with an increased understanding of the world, and of their place within it.

PATRON VOICES

- “Enrich my understanding of the world”
- “Literate”
- “Awareness”
- “A place of awakening”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

- “Ignorant”
- “Naive”

Reflection

Respondents shared that the Library serves as a unique space to **introspect**—to **reflect** on where they are on their life’s journey. In near-spiritual tones, patrons described the Library as a place where they could commune with themselves, process feelings or difficult times, and regroup and plan for their future. Respondents felt that the Library was a reliable “*place to collect one’s thoughts*” that was especially helpful during times of personal upheaval or changes in life stage.

PATRON VOICES

- “Place to collect one’s thoughts”
- “A stress free environment to plan the next step of your life, especially in transition periods”

Purpose

Respondents also shared that their relationship with the Library helps foster their sense of **purpose** and **fulfillment**, both as individual selves and as citizens within their communities. Patrons described how their Library relationship supports their sense of being useful, valuable, contributing members of society.

PATRON VOICES

- “Visiting the library gives me a goal every week”
- “Makes me feel useful”
- “The library gives you a sense of direction”
- “Fruitful both in an empirical utilitarian way as well as in non-tangible ways such as mental and emotional”

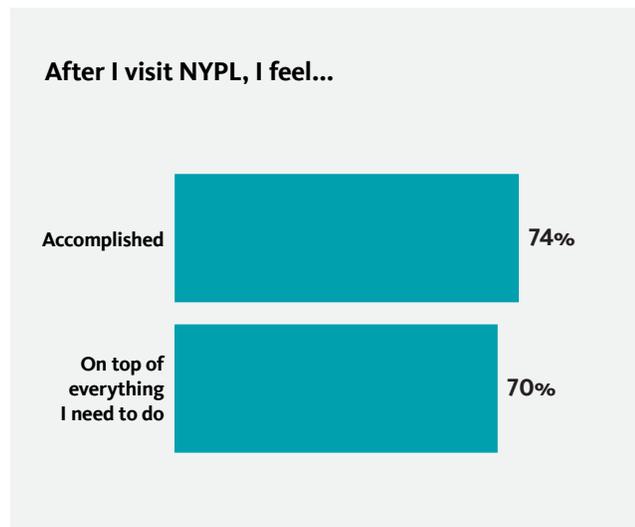
How patrons would feel without the Library:

- “Vacuum”
- “I probably would get into more mischief”

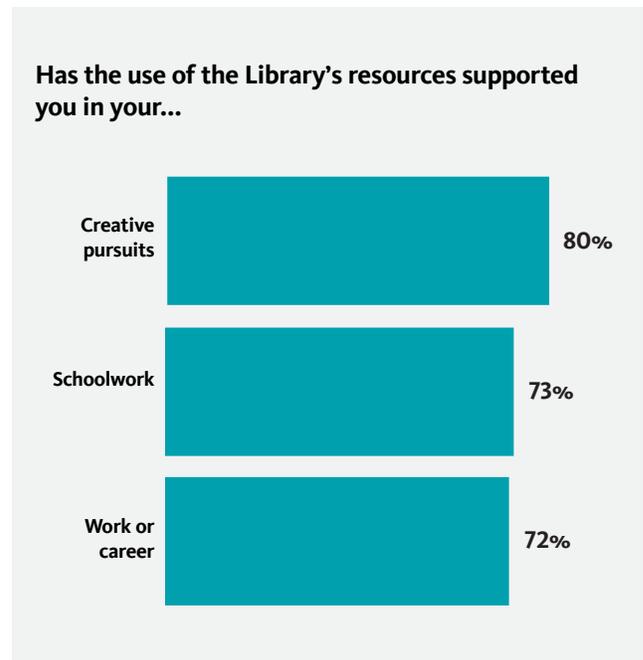
Accomplishment

The final pillar of well-being within the PERMA framework is Accomplishment: the fulfillment of one’s goals, and the feeling of mastery from doing something and doing it well.

The Library contributes to its patrons’ sense of accomplishment by supporting their productivity and the pursuit of their goals in multiple domains of their lives. In structured questions, the vast majority of respondents reported feeling a sense of accomplishment after a Library visit, with 74% of a possible 100 points garnered on the post-visit sentiment scale. Most also reported feeling on top of everything they need to do, with 70% of all possible points reported by respondents.



More than 70% of respondents in the analytic sample felt that the Library has helped them achieve their goals in several areas: creative pursuits (80%), school (73%), and work or career (72%). Interestingly, the highest share of respondents reported gains in creative goals, even more so than school and career, suggesting that respondents value the use of the Library for accomplishing non-employment related goals and getting a sense of accomplishment through working on personal projects or learning new creative skills.



Productivity

NYPL patrons span the socio-demographic spectrum of New Yorkers—and, as such, have a diverse set of goals and aspirations. But they are united in turning to the Library to pursue goals and be productive across various life domains: professional, relational, creative, and educational. Coming to the Library put respondents in a mental state of activity, which helped them accomplish everything from making progress on long-term goals to doing daily tasks. Without the Library, respondents felt they would be behind in their desired pursuits.

PATRON VOICES

“Being here allows me to do what I need to do”

“Help my kids excel in school”

“Work on personal projects”

“Conduct business”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Further behind”

Discussion of PERMA Results

Respondents to this survey reported that The New York Public Library supports their well-being along all five dimensions of the PERMA model. The most consistently reported dimension of perceived impact was Engagement, especially in the sense of loving to learn new things, and the least was Relationships. However, across the vast majority of structured items, over half of respondents reported experiencing a positive effect of some sort, whether on their internal states or their external accomplishments.

These findings lead us to consider how—via which specific mechanisms—NYPL, and public libraries more broadly, positively impact their patrons' well-being.

While our analysis of this survey cannot disentangle the exact pathways through which our patrons experience these effects, we can draw on academic research that, when put in conversation with our findings, fills in mechanistic gaps. These connections can, in turn, point to questions that could be studied in future causal research.

The following review of interdisciplinary research covering public library impact on individuals and communities spans the fields of sociology, library studies, information science, and psychology. It provides essential contextual information about the potential mechanisms by which well-being is supported within the library and through its resources.

CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

Public libraries serve multiple roles within their communities: third space, educational and learning center, doorway to culture and information. They provide their patrons with opportunities to form connections with others, build trust in individuals and institutions, decrease feelings of loneliness, meaningfully engage with cultural materials, and participate in civic life.

As “third spaces,” public libraries allow their patrons to experience a potent combination of shared purpose, engagement, and belonging. They cultivate a simultaneously specific and variegated atmosphere for visitors: a quiet space for working, reading, and self-reflection that also promotes engagement, interest, motivation, and social connection (Peterson, 2023). People who may otherwise rarely come into contact exist alongside each other for extended periods of time, participate in the same parallel activities or hobbies, or share the same cultural object, creating feelings of relation and similarity that may otherwise not exist (De Backer, 2021; Robinson, 2020).

In their provision of shared public space and programming for all ages, public libraries foster and maintain social connections that counter isolation and disseminate social capital. At a time when Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the Surgeon General of the United States, has declared an epidemic of loneliness, these opportunities for connection are essential (*Office of the Surgeon General, 2023*). The opportunities for social connection offered by public libraries also facilitate the creation of social capital—a social scientific term for the material and affective benefits that can be accrued from social

ties—for example, information about job openings, aid in times of emergency, or opportunities to expand one's perspective (Granovetter, 1973; Oliphant, 2014; Scott, 2011; Sørensen, 2021).

Social capital takes two forms: bonding social capital, or social relationships between individuals who are similar in social background and interests, and bridging social capital, or connections between individuals who are different socio-economically or who do not have similar interests. Libraries foster the development of both bonding and bridging social capital, largely in their provision of public spaces and programs, which bring people together (Johnson, 2012; Svendsen, 2013; Vårheim, 2014; Vårheim et al., 2008).

Within the context of library programs, patrons can forge temporary or more enduring relationships with each other, and/or come to view library staff as a social resource for help, knowledge, or advice. These kinds of relationships, and trust in one's community, have been linked to integration into one's community for immigrants, career advancement or opportunities, and increased subjective well-being (Johnson, 2012; Svendsen, 2013; Vårheim, 2014; Vårheim et al., 2008).

Social capital also links to the development of generalized trust, or how much an individual generally trusts others in one's community (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008); increased levels of trust in general others is associated with greater levels of cooperation and prosocial behavior. Existing together in the public space of the library may also engender generalized trust through

exposure to a diverse representation of community members and experiencing the feelings of togetherness and community.

Social capital can be seen as a precursor for the development of a sense of belonging to a larger community, which is one element of relatedness. Prior research on well-being has found that individuals with higher levels of social capital and generalized trust tend to have increased levels of subjective well-being and decreased feelings of loneliness (Abbott & Freeth, 2008; Helliwell et al., 2017). Research conducted in the library context has illustrated the benefits that immigrant program attendees receive from the social connections they make at the library (Vårheim, 2014), and that individuals experiencing homelessness receive from a space where they can exist safely and peacefully (Hodgetts et al., 2008).

A parallel concept to social capital is cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), which takes three forms: objective cultural capital (cultural objects that hold cultural currency by being valued by economic or social elites), embodied social capital (the skills, dispositions, and tastes needed to navigate social institutions as if one naturally belongs in them), and institutional capital (credentials, identities, and roles that provide authority and respect). Cultural capital can confer significant benefits in terms of socioeconomic status. For example, hiring processes often advantage candidates who are culturally similar in experiences, leisure interests, and institutional credentials to the hirers (Rivera, 2012). Similarly, children and teens from higher class backgrounds are more comfortable navigating complex bureaucratic institutions to get their needs met, leading to better educational and occupational outcomes (Lareau, 2015).

Public libraries offer access to all three forms of cultural capital (Goulding, 2008). Most directly, they provide objectified cultural capital through the ability to borrow books and media, and offer access to archival materials including artwork, diaries, and key historical documents. They provide embodied cultural capital through their social environment, which creates opportunities for individuals to learn how to act in a social space and integrate the cultural norms into their way of existing. Embodied cultural capital is also taught to library patrons via programs, especially in language classes for new immigrants or programs that help navigate institutions, unmasking the hidden or unspoken cultural expectations behind their rules and norms. Finally, public libraries have been shown to facilitate the acquisition of institutional cultural capital through,

for example, resources on college applications and career development (Summers & Buchanan, 2018; Wojciechowska & Topolska, 2021).

Cultural capital connects to flourishing through the pathways of engagement, meaning-making, and accomplishment. Engaging with the objectified cultural capital offered by public libraries can influence patrons to reconsider their place in society, what gives their lives meaning, and what they want to do with their lives. The positive humanities in particular have outlined this relationship between engagement with human culture and flourishing (Pawelski, 2022; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022). Public libraries also provide embodied and institutional cultural capital that directly facilitate their patrons' accomplishment—for example, resources to attain educational credentials, employment opportunities, and cultural integration.

Finally, libraries offer opportunities for civic engagement and civic participation. Public library usage activates patrons' civic identities by creating a context of shared resources—public goods, or civic assets—in a noncommercial environment available for the whole community. The collective ownership of library resources and spaces engenders shared responsibility and a civic-minded outlook, which may also increase generalized trust. Public libraries are also among the few public institutions that children can meaningfully be a part of even before attending school. They also provide opportunities for individuals to directly participate in civic activities, by attending community and volunteer events, registering as voters, or obtaining information about upcoming elections. Civic engagement can positively impact well-being through increasing a sense of meaning, self-efficacy in the realm of political impact, and personal responsibility (Fenn et al., 2021; Wray-Lake et al., 2019). Some research has shown that civic participation can have stronger effects on well-being for those who are marginalized in society by cultivating hope and meaning in their lives (Birger Sagiv et al., 2022).

Libraries promote the cultivation of social, cultural, and human capital, engender feelings of belonging and community, and create opportunities for civic engagement. These are in themselves not fully separable, as they all affect each other directly and indirectly. For example, when individuals feel a strong sense of belonging to a community, they are more likely to have higher levels of social capital, and vice versa. Similarly, engaging more deeply in cultural objects may evoke reflection on one's place in society and increase civic engagement.

3 Libraries Promote Personal Development Beyond Well-Being

The third and final stage of flourishing enabled by NYPL patrons' relationship with the Library goes a step beyond the PERMA model of well-being. It involves the Library's support of patrons' individual growth and the expansion of themselves and their worlds. In essence, respondents find that their use of the Library and its resources leads to a lasting change in themselves and the way they view the world.

In the prior section, we show how Library patrons experience the dimensions of PERMA through their use of the space, materials, and other resources available through the Library, and through their interactions with other patrons and Library staff. However, these experiences of PERMA typically manifest as a temporary shift in mental or emotional state, rather than a lasting change. For example, patrons described feelings of joy engendered from being within the physical space of the Library and engagement from becoming engrossed in a library book. These PERMA experiences are positive and important, but transient. Alongside these temporal experiences of well-being, we also found a qualitatively different type of outcome in the free-text responses from patrons, which described a more lasting change. In their own words, patrons expressed feeling that their Library use had a more consequential effect that went beyond PERMA: a transformation in themselves and how they experience the world around them through personal growth, learning, and expansion.

While the positive impact of public library use on externally validated components of well-being is an achievement in its own right, we argue that this final stage of flourishing is categorically different, due to its enduring and transformative nature. We conceptualize this outcome as possibly occurring as a result of repeated and accretive PERMA experiences from Library use, which act as catalysts for enduring growth and self-actualization, the pinnacle of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs.

This self-actualization and the fulfillment of one's potential, which patrons typically articulated in terms of growth and expansion, can be seen as the evidential

flower and fruit of flourishing. In some of the most heartwarming responses to the survey's free-response question, respondents described the Library as an essential component of transformation in their lives. The types of enduring change articulated by patrons tended to take two forms: the first, expansion of the self and their perception of the world around them and the second of growth, learning, and development as a person.

Expansion

In the first type of transformation, patrons articulated their use of the Library as creating a sense of personal and world **expansion**. Through their use of Library resources, patrons gained a deeper understanding of their place within the world, and the feeling that they could—and do—have an impact on their world and on those around them. Further, they could more easily see the interconnectedness of a globalized world and the breadth of existing perspectives on societal issues and life itself. Patrons articulating this effect described it as a nurturing of open-mindedness and empathy, which opened doors to the outside world, and let them connect to and explore it on their own terms.

PATRON VOICES

“Helps me expand my boundaries in all kinds of ways”

“NYPL helps me see the world through other people’s eyes...in more depth, and broader perspectives”

“Aware of the largeness of the world around me”

“Opened doors”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“Smaller”

“Narrower”

Growth

The second type of “beyond PERMA” outcome which patrons expressed in the free response question was a feeling of personal **growth** and **learning** contributing to the achievement of their full potential.

While experiences of PERMA inside the Library or through its resources could involve learning new skills (Accomplishment) or gaining knowledge and information (Engagement), this second type of personal growth is broader, pointing to a meaningful realization of goals and an authentic self, spanning across all dimensions of life: personal, social, and professional.

Patrons shared that without access to the Library and its supportive resources, they would still be ‘stuck’ in an old version of themselves, unable to evolve. In other words, patrons tied their Library use to growing into larger, more fully-realized, or more well-rounded versions of themselves.

PATRON VOICES

“Essential to my learning and development as a human being”

“Professional development, personal and spiritual growth”

How patrons would feel without the Library:

“My potential would be reached halfway”

The survey also included a structured question focusing on the Library’s impact on patrons’ personal growth. Eighty-eight percent of respondents in the analytic sample said that their use of the Library and its resources had supported them in their personal growth. Across the set of questions assessing goal achievement, personal growth was the type of growth respondents were most likely to say the Library’s resources had impacted, more than creative, career, work, or school-related outcomes.

Has the use of the Library’s resources supported you in your...

Personal growth

88%

CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

Prior literature helps contextualize how temporal experiences of well-being elements can lead to more permanent individual growth. For example, experiencing autonomy and competence, two basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000) related to PERMA, have been associated with greater creative performance and global life satisfaction (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) and are further theorized to be vital to resilience and growth (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1991) argued that flow experiences render the organization of the self experiencing it more complex and lead to growth. Further, several of the flourishing components identified in this survey—meaning, hope, and optimism—have been more generally associated with personal growth (Yu et al., 2023).

There has been very little academic research on experiences of personal growth as an outcome of library use. While some studies, mentioned earlier in this paper, have shown lasting benefits in trust, connectedness, and social and cultural capital arising from library use, almost none have focused on personal transformation or change in one’s worldview. This is an area in which future research could have a particularly impactful role.

Synthesis of Impact

Up to this point, we have illustrated that NYPL patrons associate their use of the Library and its resources with positive well-being impacts along all five dimensions of the PERMA framework, as well as with stages of flourishing that precede and follow from it. These effects have been shown across all types of Library patrons responding to the survey.

NYPL's user base reflects the underlying diversity of the area it serves. Everyone who comes to the Library arrives with their own unique set of life circumstances and desired goals; thus, it is likely that there are differences in the Library's impact on well-being, depending on patrons' demographic characteristics and patterns of Library use.

In this section, we explore how the degree of the Library's positive impact on patrons' self-reported well-being may depend on patrons' socioeconomic status, as well as patterns of Library usage. We hypothesize that individuals who are economically disadvantaged may report stronger Library impacts on their well-being because they may not have access to other, non-Library sources to support their flourishing. We also hypothesize that patrons who use the Library in more physical and time-intensive ways may report a stronger well-being effect from the Library vs. patrons with more transactional and remote usage, because they experience a stronger treatment of all the Library has to offer.

In the following two sections we group our results, split by the independent variable, into the following three types of measures:

- **Perceived impact on well-being:** respondents' self-reported perception of the Library's impact on them, with the options "no effect," "a small positive effect," and "a big positive effect."
- **Post-visit sentiment:** the extent to which respondents experienced specific emotions following their most recent visit to an NYPL location.

- **Goal achievement:** whether respondents' see their use of the Library as supporting them in achieving their goals in specific life domains.

We use both a derived measure of income, coming from respondents' ZIP codes, as well as binary indicators of their usage types, to look for differences in well-being effects across different patron types.

Respondent Income

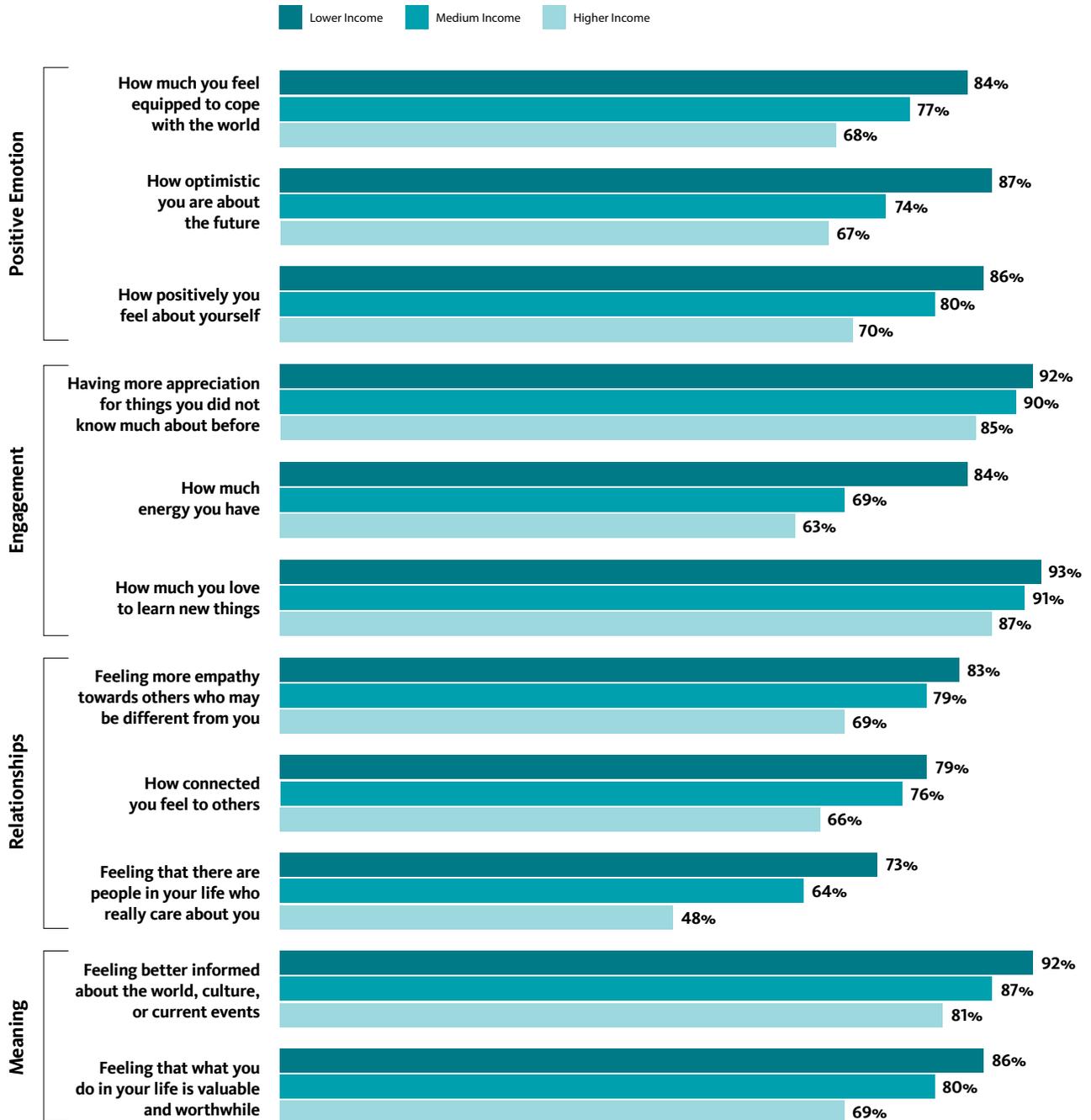
Perceived Impact on Well-Being

First, we examine the percentage of respondents in each income bracket who felt the Library had a positive effect on their perceived well-being. Across all measured items, respondents living in lower-income ZIP codes report the highest levels of positive Library impact, and respondents living in higher-income ZIP codes reported the lowest. These differences are especially pronounced in the items measuring the Relationship dimension of PERMA. For example, 73% of respondents in lower-income ZIP codes report that the Library positively impacts their feeling like *there are people who really care about them*, compared to 48% of respondents living in higher-income areas—a 25 percentage point difference. Similarly, 79% of respondents living in lower-income areas report that the Library positively impacts *how connected they feel to others*, vs. 66% of respondents living in higher-income areas—a 13 percentage point difference.

The Engagement dimension of PERMA contained two of the smallest differences by income: six and seven percentage points for the Library's positive impact on *how much I love to learn new things* and *having more appreciation for things you did not know about before*, respectively. This dimension also had the second largest difference for the Library's positive impact on *how much energy you have*, with 84% of respondents in lower-income ZIP codes reporting a positive impact, compared to 63% of respondents in higher-income ZIP codes—a 21 percentage point difference.

Impact on Well-Being Dimensions

By income of respondent's ZIP code



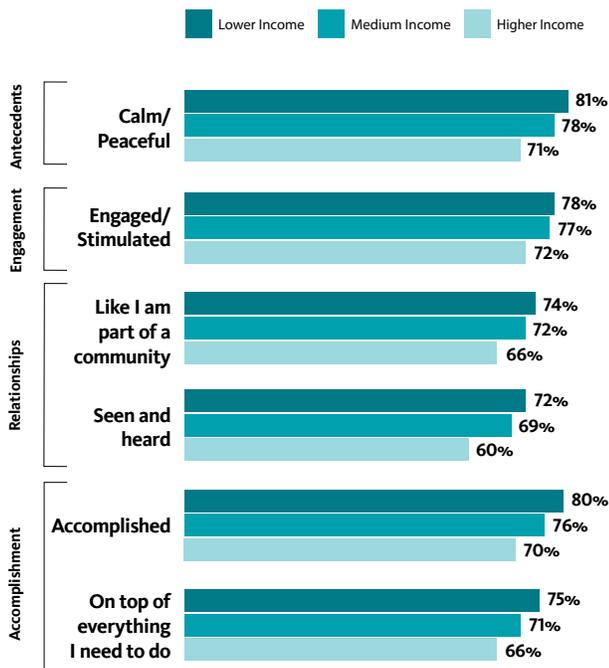
Note: The synthesis plots combine small positive effect and big positive effect into one positive effect percentage, to ease interpretation of the plots.

Post-Visit Sentiment

In our second measure of well-being, the affective impact of a Library visit, we see the same pattern, with respondents living in lower-income areas being most likely to report feeling *any* of these emotions, and those living in higher-income areas the least likely to do so. This was especially strong for feeling seen and heard, with a 12 percentage point difference between those in lower (72%) and higher (60%) income ZIP codes. The smallest difference between respondents living in lower or higher income ZIP codes came from the feeling of being engaged or stimulated, with only a six percentage point difference—78% versus 72%, respectively.

Impact on Post-Visit Sentiment

By income of respondent's ZIP code



Goal Achievement

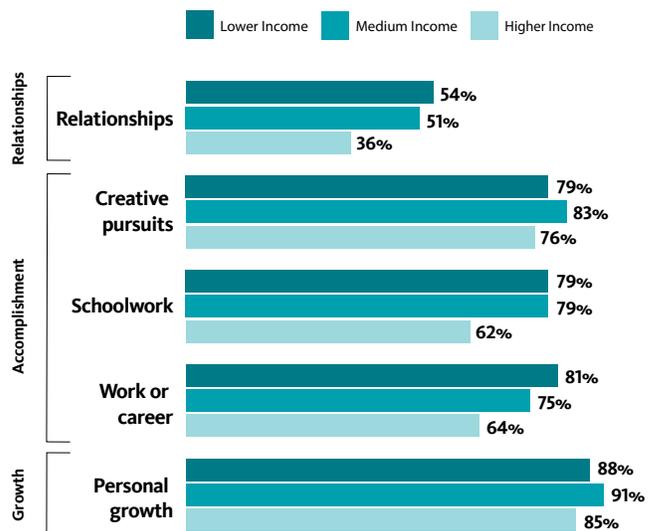
We see a largely similar pattern when it comes to the structured questions focusing on the Library's positive impact on respondents' pursuit of their goals, across different dimensions of life. Across all five goal categories, respondents in higher-income ZIP codes had the lowest proportion self-reporting that their use of the Library supported their goals. The biggest difference between

respondents in higher- and lower-income ZIP codes comes again in the area of relationships, with 54% of respondents living in lower-income ZIP codes reporting Library support in that area, vs. 36% in higher-income ones—an 18 percentage point difference.

There were also large differences between respondents living in lower- and higher-income ZIP codes along the work and school dimensions, with about 80% of respondents in lower-income areas—62–64% of respondents in higher-income areas—reporting Library impact. Interestingly, those living in medium-income ZIP codes report the highest agreement with the Library supporting their creative pursuits (83%) and personal growth (91%), a variation from the dominant pattern of respondents living in lower-income ZIP codes reporting the greatest impact. However, the differences between respondents living in lower- and medium-income ZIP codes were not statistically significant. In fact, the differences between all three income groups do not exceed seven percentage points in either of these two dimensions, indicating that there is less of a differential effect along income lines in the Library's nurturing of its patrons' personal growth and creativity.

Impact on Goal Achievement

By income of respondent's ZIP code



Overall, we find that our respondents who live in ZIP codes with a median household income under \$50,000

a year generally report the strongest well-being effects tied to their use of the Library and its resources. This differential is especially strong for relational benefits and the smallest for engagement, goal accomplishment associated with creativity, and the flourishing outcome of personal growth. This last finding is especially interesting, because it shows that respondents experience flourishing through their use of the Library regardless of their initial state of well-being.

Respondent Pattern of Library Use

In our second analysis of Library impact by respondent characteristics, we split our respondents into categories based on their usage characteristics. Our categories are:

- Materials users, who use library materials such as books, CDs, or DVDs in our branch libraries or special collections in our research libraries
- Holds users, a subset of materials users who place items on advance hold and then pick up them in person
- Computer and technology users who come to the Library to access desktop computers and Wi-Fi
- Space users who work, read, study, and relax in the public space provided by the Library
- Program attendees, who visit the Library to be part of a program or class
- E-only users, whose relationship with the Library is entirely digital, focusing on e-books, digital audiobooks, and databases accessible remotely

Respondents—other than those in our e-only category—can fall into multiple usage categories, reflecting the fact that patrons can simultaneously use the Library across two or more categories, such as space and computer usage or materials and program attendance.

Perceived Impact on Well-Being

The graph below collapses the scale of perceived impact on well-being by the dimension of PERMA the statements operationalize, to allow for easier interpretation of the results. To summarize the impact, we take the average percentage of users in each use type who report a small or big positive Library effect on the statements that fall into that PERMA dimension.

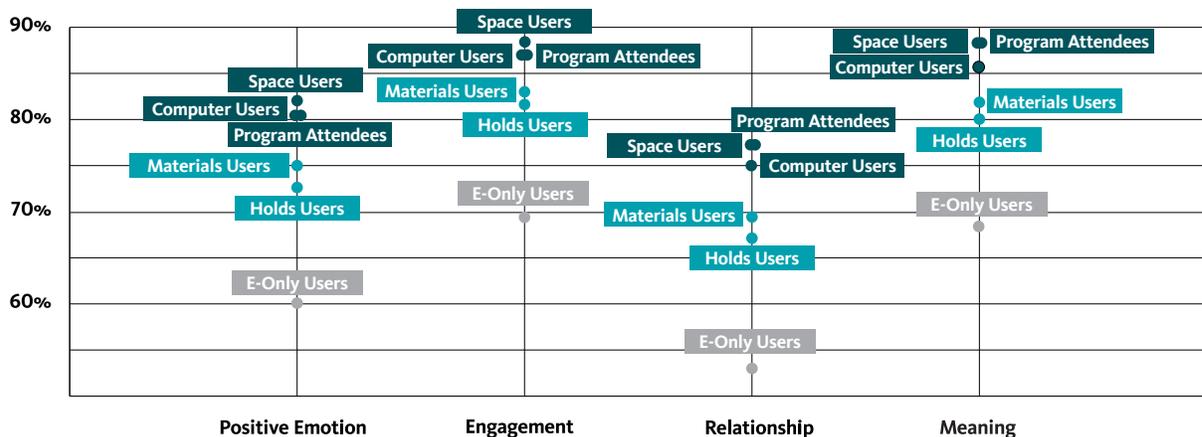
To provide an illustrative example, we can take the Positive Emotion dimension of PERMA and the subset of materials users. First, we calculate the percentage of materials users who report a small or big positive effect on the three statements capturing engagement:

- How positively you feel about yourself (77%)
- How optimistic you are about the future (73%)
- The extent to which you can cope with stress in the future (74%)

The average across these three items capturing Positive Emotion is 74.6%, which is the value plotted in the illustration below.

We see a consistent pattern across the elements of PERMA: the deeper and more time-intensive a

Impact on Perception of Well-Being Measures



No measures in the set of perceived impact on well-being scale corresponded to the concept of Accomplishment in PERMA, and thus it is not presented in this plot. Please refer to the data & methods chapter for more detail on which survey items corresponded to PERMA dimensions and stages of flourishing.

respondents' Library use, the larger their average self-reported impact. Respondents in the e-only category, who never physically visit Library locations, report the lowest impact on their well-being. Respondents who spend longer amounts of time inside Library spaces—our space users, computer users, and program attendees—report the highest levels of impact. Materials and holds users fall in between these two extremes, with slightly lower average perceived impact than program, computer, or space users, but considerably more than our e-only users.

Post-Visit Sentiment

The post-visit sentiment analysis does not include our e-only users. Because e-only users do not visit physical Library locations, they did not answer any questions about how visiting the Library makes them feel. Additionally, for ease of plot interpretation, we group usage types into three categories: materials and holds users, program attendees, and computer and space users.

These results follow a similar, although not identical pattern, to those in the section above. Materials and

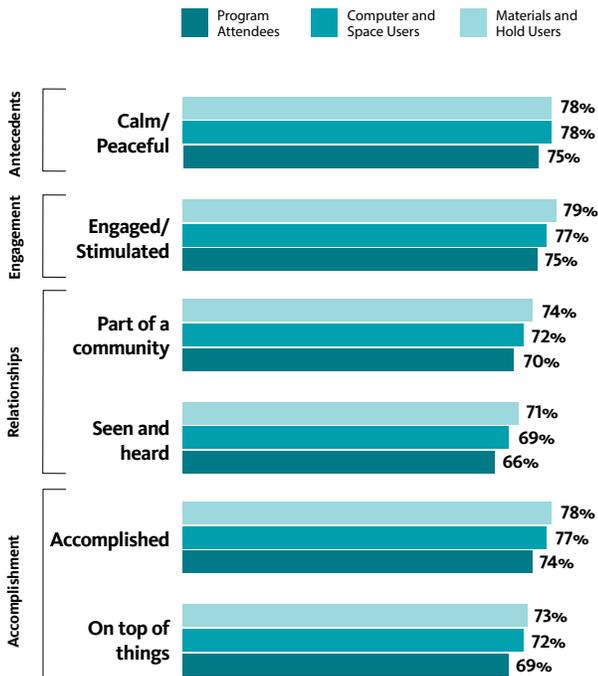
holds users were least likely to report strongly feeling any of these sentiments. Program attendees were the most likely to report strongly feeling any of these sentiments, perhaps because they were most likely to have interacted with others in the course of their visit. However, the differences across all items were small, never exceeding a five percentage point difference.

Goal Achievement

Finally, we examine differences in the Library's support of patron's goal achievement across respondents' usage types. These differences generally follow the aforementioned relationship in which the more physical and time-intensive the type of usage, the stronger the reported Library impact. Program attendees have the greatest percentage of respondents indicating that their use of the Library and its resources supported them in their goals, especially goals in the arena of relationships. Across all categories, the lowest percentage of respondents indicating that the Library and its resources supported their goals were the materials, holds, and e-only users.

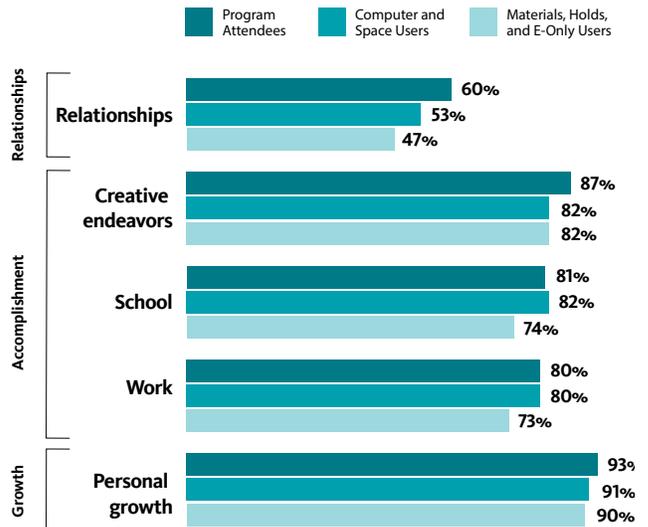
Post-Visit Sentiment

By usage type



Goal Achievement

By usage type



Both analyses of the independent variables follow a strikingly similar pattern. Although the impact of Library usage on well-being is high across all groups of respondents, we see the highest impact for respondents who live in the lowest income ZIP codes of the Library's service area, and for respondents who use the Library in more physical and time-intensive ways. The differential impact is most apparent along the Relationships

dimension and least different along the Engagement dimension across all types of measures. These two groups are not completely independent, as there is considerable overlap between one's sociodemographic status and the ways in which one uses the Library. Future work should aim to disentangle the specific mechanisms leading to these effects.

“

Where I can get my mind primed for when I get back to school... I started coming because I noticed that to get to a certain point in my life I needed to take certain actions, and the library provided that quiet space where I could do that and focus.

Discussion & Conclusions

Respondents to NYPL's patron survey overwhelmingly reported that their use of the Library and its assets—spaces, materials, staff, technology, programs, and other patrons—positively impacted their well-being. In their free-text responses, many patrons also acknowledged and appreciated that this impact extended beyond them, to benefit their families, communities, and New York City overall.

This work is descriptive and correlational—not causal—in nature; however, we believe these results provide meaningful evidence of the Library's role in supporting individuals' flourishing. These findings are a testament to public libraries' contributions to the health of their communities. As such, they point to the possible benefits of public libraries playing a more active and prominent role in discussions about the health and well-being of communities across the country. While the survey findings discussed here are specific to New York City, we believe it is likely that similar well-being effects could be found in public libraries in other urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the United States.

In recent years, public libraries across the country have had their activities, funding, and, in some cases, very existence threatened by budget cuts, calls for book banning, and attempts at politicization. Given this climate, the findings from this survey hold specific, urgent meaning both within New York City and beyond, because they show the full extent of what is at stake when communities face a loss of access to all that public libraries have to offer.

In their free-text responses, our patrons made clear that their sense of the Library as a stable resource they can rely on to be there for them is an essential precondition for the positive impact the Library has on their well-being. In 2023 and 2024, the New York, Brooklyn, and Queens Public Libraries experienced city funding cuts that led to a loss of Sunday service. While funding was ultimately restored a few months later, allowing for a restoration of those closed hours, real or threatened

disruptions to service undermine libraries' perceived stability and reliability in the eyes of their patrons. Given this paper's findings, this erosion of stability could reduce the well-being returns that public libraries are able to generate for their communities.

Further, in communities across the country—including, in this year, New York City—public funding debates sometimes pit public library budgets against the need to invest more in public safety. Our survey findings can add nuance to this discussion as well. Respondents stated that NYPL locations **are** places of public safety—public spaces where they both feel safe, and are safe. As such, libraries should be seen as valuable contributors to any community's matrix of public safety.

Limitations

The primary limitations of this analysis come from two areas: sampling and measurement. Our sample consists of an online convenience sample and an in-person sampling strategy that was designed to be as representative as possible of the in-person visitors to 14 locations across NYPL's service area. However, our sample may not perfectly capture the underlying population of the NYPL patron base. It is possible that those who did respond to the survey and chose to answer the well-being questions have a strong relationship with the Library and an underlying desire to report positive impact along these measures.

Second, the ideal way of measuring impact is through a causal inference research design, rather than asking respondents to reflect on their perception of a program or organization's impact. By obtaining repeated measures of well-being indicators over time, or before and after a single library visit, and associating them with patterns of library usage, we could make a stronger case about a causal relationship between library use and flourishing.

While our conclusions are not causal, our analysis clearly demonstrates that respondents conceive of, and communicate about, the Library as an important contributor

to their well-being. Rather than dismissing or devaluing the felt experience of individuals, we argue that we should view it as important evidence in and of itself.

Future Research

The work presented here outlines a complex picture relating the use of public libraries to individual and collective well-being and broader flourishing. With these findings, we make the case for understanding the role of public institutions—and, specifically, public libraries—not only in their direct provision of services, but in what those services allow their users to achieve: their full potential.

These findings suggest multiple lines of further research to pursue, in order to fill in the initial outline we've sketched here, and to uncover mechanisms of impact that could ultimately lead to specific recommendations for interventions and policies. For example, how similar would these well-being findings from New York City look in other urban locations, or suburban or rural ones? Would different needs, resources, and lifestyles in different socio-demographic environments lead to different degrees or patterns of library impact on patrons' well-being? Can we better disentangle how different types of library usage are related to experiences of well-being? Is it the time-intensity of usage or the likelihood of interacting with others at the library that most directly, or most deeply, contributes to well-being effects?

Additionally, this work was more focused on how public library usage can be associated with higher levels of well-being, rather than with the alleviation of ill-being. Future research could explore how library use might mitigate negative mental health experiences and emotional suffering. Additional research could also go beyond psychological flourishing to explore the effect libraries have on other aspects of flourishing, including physical health, supportive communities, and care for the environment.

“

[The Library] offers us hope that we can do something, that we can make a change, that we can advance. It gives us a chance to start again.

Data & Methods

In November and December 2023, The New York Public Library fielded a survey focusing on our patrons' library attitudes and impact, behavior and awareness, and demographics. Survey distribution took two formats: an online survey accessible via the website and disseminated in Library newsletters, and a paper format, distributed via intercept strategy at select libraries across the NYPL system. NYPL consists of both branch and research libraries. Both research and branch library users were included in the sample, with alternative questions relating to their library usage corresponding to the type of library from which respondents were sampled.

Paper survey distribution was done via a multi-stage clustering sampling strategy. First, all branch libraries were clustered using the k-means algorithm into groups based on demographic data of each branch's service area and their library usage data from fiscal years 2023, 2022, and 2019. Demographic data included racial-ethnic demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status indicators, rates of access to technology and Wi-Fi, and the total population living in the library's service area. Library usage variables included values corresponding to library usage indicators, averaged monthly: check-outs, program attendance and sessions, computer sessions, and visits. Monthly average visits, program sessions, program attendees, median income, and service area population were log-transformed to account for right-tailed skewness. All metrics were scaled, such that each metric has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 for purposes of model fit.

A k-means model with 4 clusters was selected as the best fitting model by assessing the extent to which branch libraries within a cluster were different from each other on these metrics. Two more clusters were added by hand due to their specific characteristics: first, branch libraries that serve as hubs for a borough or serve a specific purpose (e.g. Bronx Library Center, Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library) and the four research libraries. Libraries were then selected randomly, proportional to size, from the clusters,

resulting in 15 branch libraries. The research library chosen for sampling—The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts—was not selected randomly but chosen by hand due to its unique role as serving as both a research library and a lending library. One selected branch library, Morris Park Library, was temporarily closed during the survey collection period so it was not included in the sample of in-person paper survey distribution. The table below displays the final in-person library sample, the borough in which each is located, and the general income level of its service area. Bronx Library Center and the Library for the Performing Arts do not have associated income levels, because they serve as hubs for larger communities.

Branch Name	Borough	Income Level
Harlem	Manhattan	Lower Income
Harry Belafonte 115th St	Manhattan	Lower Income
Mariners Harbor	Staten Island	Medium Income
Huguenot Park	Staten Island	Medium Income
Throgs Neck	Bronx	Medium Income
Morrisania	Bronx	Lower Income
Sedgwick	Bronx	Lower Income
Grand Concourse	Bronx	Lower Income
High Bridge	Manhattan	Lower Income
Epiphany	Manhattan	Medium Income
53rd Street Branch	Manhattan	Medium Income
New Amsterdam	Manhattan	Higher Income
Jefferson Market	Manhattan	Higher Income
Bronx Library Center	Bronx	Not Applicable
Library for the Performing Arts	Manhattan	Not Applicable

Periods of two-to-three hours during the primary week of survey data collection were proportionally sampled based on visit frequency statistics, and volunteers distributed surveys to incoming patrons initially on an interval strategy, depending on the estimated number of visitors to the library. After a relatively high refusal rate to take the survey, the interval strategy was removed and every patron entering the library during the two to three hour period was asked to take the survey. A link

and invitation to the online survey was available on the nypl.org website's front page throughout the survey period and sent out in weekly Library newsletters and on Library social media accounts. The survey was available in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, and Bengali. In total, there were 2,401 respondents to the survey, 1,765 to the online format and 636 to the paper version.

Format	Number of Respondents
Online	1,765
Paper	636

Variables

The survey was conceptualized as a comprehensive assessment of patrons' relationships with the Library. As such, it asked about a number of library usage, access, and impact areas. In this analysis, we focus on the library impact variables corresponding to dimensions of well-being as well as types of library usage and a respondent's area's income level.

Theoretical Variables & Method

The theoretical and mechanistic arguments of this paper rely on our analysis of responses to structured survey questions, combined with an analysis of one open-ended question in the survey: "How would your life be different without The New York Public Library?" One thousand six-hundred and forty-three participants responded to this question with valid answers. To analyze this question, we employed a mixed-methods approach, with two authors inductively coding the responses after reviewing all 1,643 comments and one author using a topic modeling approach. We landed on a three-bucket structure encompassing 20 different elements, displayed on page 8 and discussed throughout chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Dependent Variables

For the empirical testing of the relationship between library use and flourishing, we used three types of measures of well-being: perceived impact of the Library and its resources on elements of well-being, post-visit sentiment impressions, and the support of the Library in goal achievement.

Perceived Impact on Well-Being

Our first set of dependent variables are modified versions

of the items on the European Social Survey used by Huppert & So (2013) to measure subjective flourishing across European countries. These items originally measured an individuals' level of well-being across the domains of flourishing, so we modified them to focus on the respondent's perception of how their usage of the library may have impacted how they felt along these dimensions. The wording of the question was as follows: "What sort of impact, if any, has your use of the Library and its resources had on..." with the options no impact, a small positive impact, and a large positive impact. There were a total of 11 items in a matrix format.

Due to the modifications of original items, and the novelty of introducing well-being concepts to a library context, these questions were tested in focus groups and interviews with patrons at branch libraries across NYPL to assess how they would be received by respondents to the survey.

Post-Visit Sentiment

Our second measure of well-being asks respondents to reflect on how they feel after leaving the Library. Emotion words were selected both a priori given our interest in well-being as conceptualized by Seligman (2011), but also supplemented by emotions provided by patrons through focus groups and interviews. Given the set of emotions: accomplished, engaged/stimulated, calm/peaceful, like I am on top of everything I need to do, seen and heard, and like I am part of a community, respondents chose a point along a seven-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so). We conceptualized this measure as a thermometer scale, in which if everyone selected "very much so" for an emotion or feeling, we would consider that achieving all of the possible points. The scale was shifted down by one point during the calculation of the metric.

Goal Achievement

The final measure of well-being pertains to how a respondent's use of the Library and its resources supported his, her, or their goals. Respondents were asked "Has the use of the Library's resources supported you in your:" school work, work or career, creative pursuits, personal growth, and relationships, with the options: no, yes, and does not apply to me.

Each of these dependent variables corresponded with a dimension of PERMA or the antecedent environmental

Question	Pre	P	E	R	M	A	G
Perceived Impact on Well-Being							
How positively you feel about yourself							
How much you love to learn new things							
How optimistic you are about the future							
The extent to which you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile							
How much energy you have							
The extent to which you feel that there are people in your life who really care about you							
How connected you feel to others							
How much you feel equipped to cope with the world							
Feeling like you are better informed about the world, culture, or current events							
Feeling more empathy towards others who may be different from you							
Having more appreciation for things you did not know much about before							
Post-Visit Sentiment							
Accomplished							
Calm/peaceful							
Like I am on top of everything I need to do							
Seen and heard							
Like I am part of a community							
Engaged/stimulated							
Goal Achievement							
School work							
Work or career							
Creative pursuits							
Personal growth							
Relationships							
Pre = Preconditions P = Positive Emotion E = Engagement R = Relationships M = Meaning A = Accomplishment G = Growth							

conditions needed for PERMA or the resulting personal growth consequence of PERMA. The table above illustrates which dependent variables are associated with each category.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variables used in the synthesis part of our analysis were those corresponding to different types of library usage and demographic variables associated with socioeconomic status, particularly the income of the respondents' ZIP code. For the former, respondents were asked their relative frequency of particular library usage when they visited their NYPL library location, with the options never, every once in a

while, sometimes, and most of the time or every time. The types of library usage asked about varied slightly depending on whether the library was a branch or research library, but all of the items could be split into several overarching types: materials (books, CDs, DVDs) usage, a subset of materials usage in which users placed items on hold to pick up, usage of library technology (computers and/or Wi-Fi), program attendance, and usage of library spaces.

These items were binarized to classify individuals as users of that type of library offering such that for materials and space usage, if a respondent said they did either sometimes or most of the time or every time,

they were classified as a materials user or a space user, respectively. Holds users are a subset of materials users who say they pick up materials they had placed on hold most of the time or every time. Because a smaller percentage of respondents tend to attend programs or use computers, these were binarized such that if a respondent indicated that they attended programs or used computers every once in a while, sometimes, or most of the time or every time, they were classified as program attendees or computer users, respectively. Respondents can fall into multiple types of usage depending on their responses and their depth of library usage. A portion of the online sample are our e-only users, who never come to physical NYPL locations and only use e-resources available from the Library in e-books/audiobooks and digital collections. These respondents do not fall into any of the other types of usage, as they only use the library electronically and never in person.

The second independent variable concerns the income level of a respondent. The survey did ask respondents to self-disclose their household's total annual income, but 30% of respondents who answered the question selected "prefer not to say." It is likely that those respondents who declined to answer the question were not evenly distributed across the income distribution, but rather fall on either extreme of the distribution. Due to this, we instead rely on the ZIP code of a respondent, drawing the median household income for that area from the 2021 American Community Survey five-year estimates. For those who did not provide their ZIP code, we first used their self-disclosed income, and then if they did not provide their income, we used the income of their branch's service area. These incomes were then categorized into three levels: lower-income, corresponding to under \$50,000 a year, medium income, between \$50,000 and \$99,999 a year, and higher-income, above \$100,000 a year.

Method

Because this is an exploratory, descriptive study of the perceived impact of library usage on subjective well-being, these analyses are themselves descriptive and not predictive. We report the percentages of respondents falling into perceived impact of library usage on dimensions of well-being, and then investigate how this relationship is different depending on a library user's type of usage and their income level.

Because this survey was entirely voluntary and not

compensated financially, there was a fair amount of both item non-response and survey non-completion. For respondents who did not respond to the specific question being analyzed, we remove them from the sample for that item only. For example, if a respondent answered enough questions to be categorized as a materials user but did not answer the space usage question, they would still be included in the statistics for materials users but not space users: we did not do list-wise deletion across all items in the analysis, which would be typical for predictive modeling. Only those who did not answer **at least one** of the independent and dependent variables were excluded from the analysis, resulting in an analytic sample of 1,974 respondents. The following table shows the descriptive statistics of the analytic sample.

Descriptive Characteristics of the Analytic Sample

Variable	N = 1,974
Materials User	1,362 (73%)
Space User	879 (46%)
Computer User	858 (47%)
Program Attendee	971 (51%)
Holds User	777 (45%)
E-Only User	125 (6.3%)
Income	
Lower	377 (20%)
Medium	762 (40%)
Higher	754 (40%)
Survey Format	
Online	1,442 (73%)
Paper	532 (27%)
1 n (%)	

The most common type of user was a materials user, with almost three-quarters of the sample, followed by program attendees, who comprise almost half of the sample. Next are computer and space users, falling slightly under half of the sample. The smallest group are our e-only users, who make up only 6.3% of the sample. This population is likely undersampled due to these users not coming to physical library locations or going on the website, but rather only accessing library materials through third-party apps such as Libby. A larger proportion of the sample comes from the online sample than the paper sample, with slightly more than a quarter of respondents taking the survey on paper through the multi-stage clustering strategy.

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The New York Public Library

Founded in 1895, The New York Public Library is the nation's largest public library system with a unique combination of neighborhood libraries throughout the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island and four scholarly research centers—the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, the Library for the Performing Arts, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the Thomas Yoseloff Business Center at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Library (SNFL). Serving millions of patrons a year both in person and online, the Library offers free materials, classes, and programs for users of all ages.

The Humanities and Human Flourishing Project, Center for Positive Psychology, University of Pennsylvania

The Humanities and Human Flourishing Project seeks to understand, assess, and advance the effects of arts and humanities engagement on the flourishing of individuals and communities. It is situated within the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center, whose mission is to promote research, training, education, and the dissemination of positive psychology.

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*The New York Public Library
is central to my family's
well-being and life.*

—Patron, New Amsterdam Library



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