COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Submitted To:
Hillside Public Library

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The following community needs assessment report provides information on circulation statistics, use of library services and programs, and district demographics, as well as feedback from patrons, staff members, community leaders, and the Board of Trustees.

Trend Analysis

Total monthly circulation has gradually decreased over the past three years, with decreases or minimal increases in every category of materials, with the exception of adult nonfiction audiobooks and juvenile fiction audiobooks.

Demographic Analysis

The population served by Hillside Public Library has become increasingly diverse, with the percentage of residents identifying as black/African-American increasing to 43.2% in 2010 and the number of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino more than doubling between 2000 and 2010.

The median household income in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars for households in Hillside was $52,395, and more than one-fifth of children under 18 years of age live under the poverty level, making library services a critical community need.

Community Input

An email survey was distributed to approximately 261 patrons with email addresses on file with Hillside Public Library on September 12, 2013, which was administered using online survey tool SurveyMonkey. After accounting for 45 emails that bounced back, 20 of 216 individuals who received the survey responded to it (9.26% response rate). Five focus groups were held with stakeholders of Hillside Public Library in October 2013: patrons (two groups), community leaders, library staff members, and the Hillside Public Library Board of Trustees. Lastly, a mail survey was distributed November 25, 2013 and included an accompanying online version via SurveyMonkey. An additional 57 responses were collected.

Trends and Implications

The community surveys and focus groups revealed several strengths of the library, including its location and size, the atmosphere of the building, the friendliness and helpfulness of library staff, and the availability and type of materials offered. Feedback and comments collected through the surveys and focus groups also yielded a few opportunities for improvement, including marketing and email communications, updates to the library building, further development of community partnerships, and determination of the library's role in advancing community literacy.
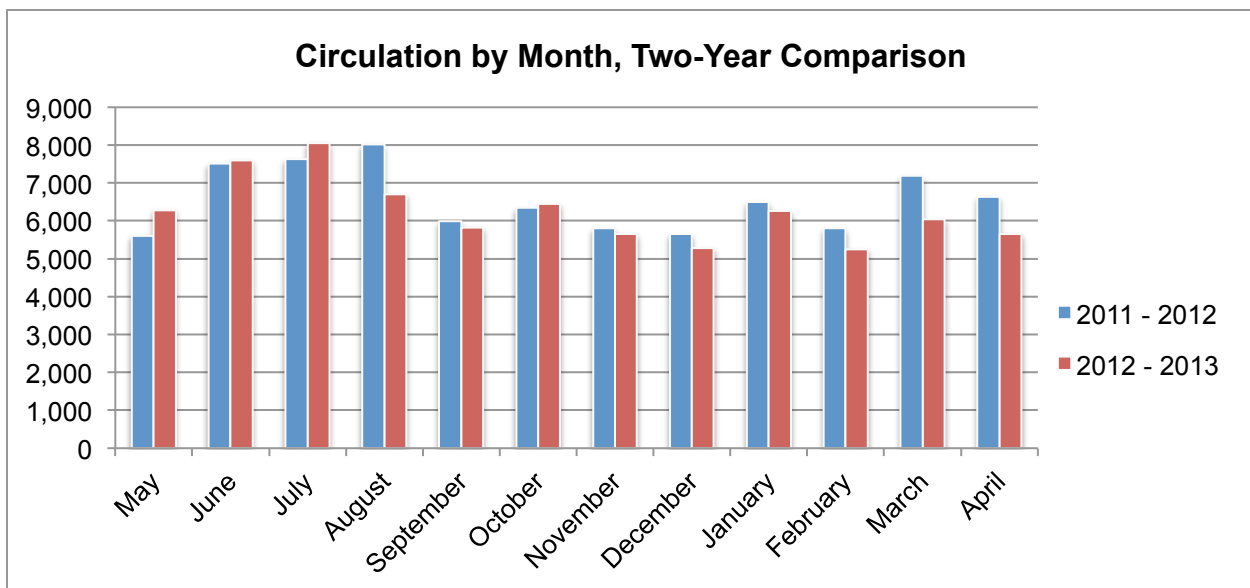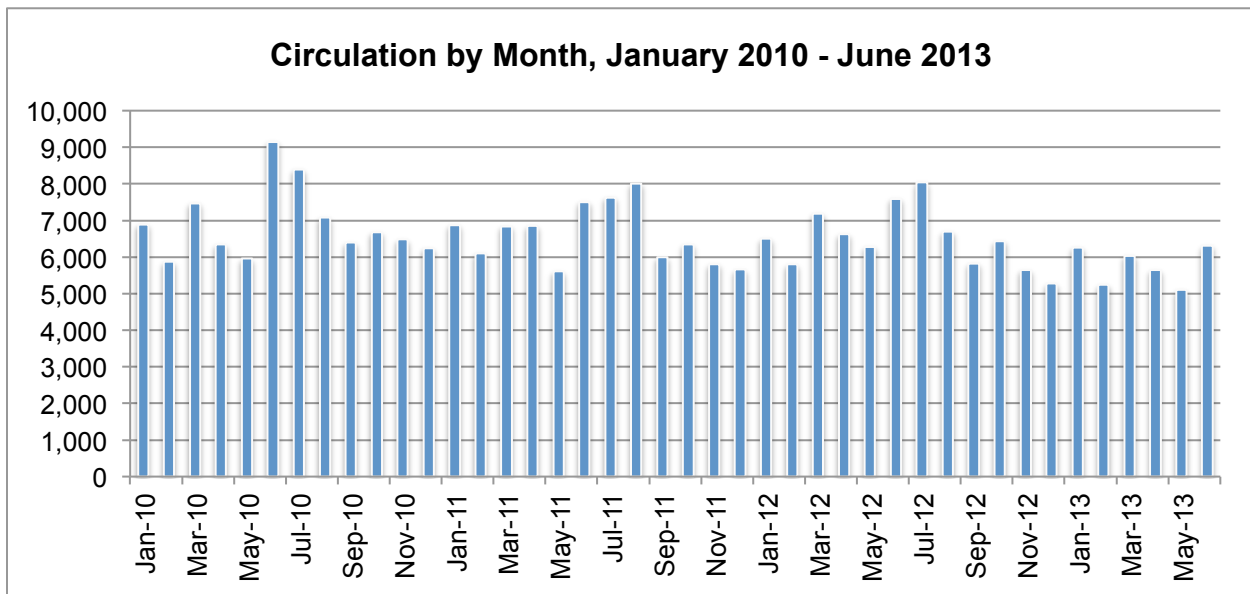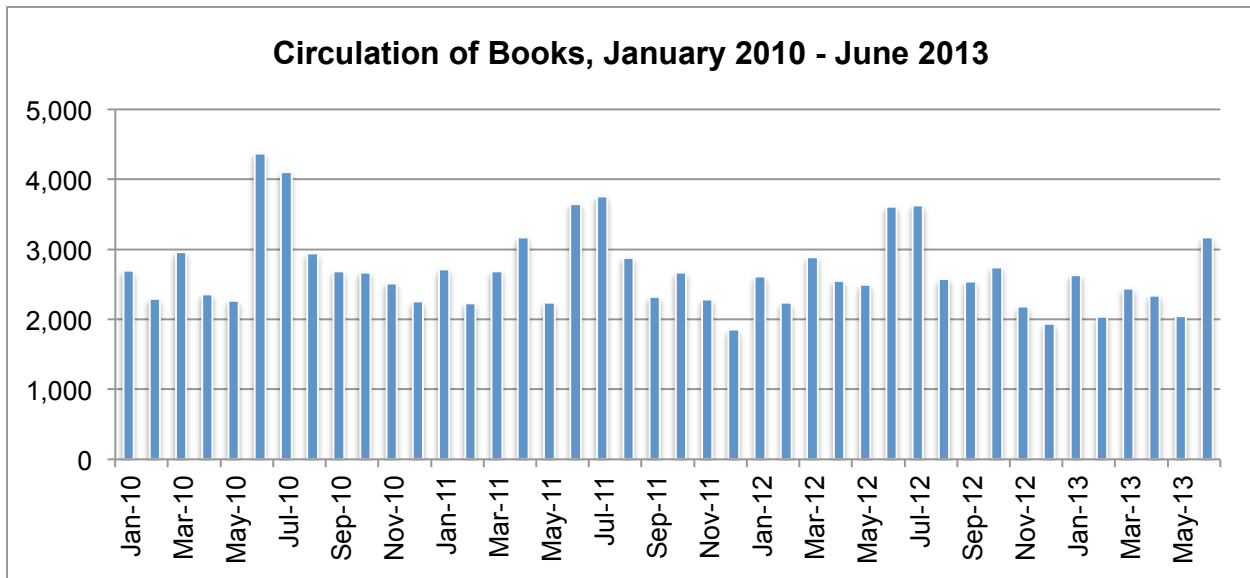
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Introduction

Today's libraries are subject to high levels of scrutiny from their constituent groups pertaining to budgeting, allocation of resources, and response to user needs and desires. As the strategic planning process begins, it is vital to be in tune with the thoughts of all of these groups – users, taxpayers, and community partners. An effective community needs assessment provides a framework for the library to allocate resources most effectively according to the needs of its community, remain relevant to its patrons, and help position it to react to changing trends in the future.

This report provides information on circulation statistics, use of library services and programs, and district demographics, as well as feedback from patrons, staff members, community leaders, and the Board of Trustees.

Trend Analysis

As shown in the chart below, total monthly circulation between January 2010 and June 2013 has decreased slightly over time, from 6,893 materials checked out in January 2010 to 6,311 materials checked out in June 2013. Circulation fluctuates with the time of year and extenuating circumstances, such as renovations at neighboring Bellwood Public Library during the summer of 2010. Hillside Public Library serviced Bellwood Public Library patrons for this six-week period, as reflected by the increase in circulation during this time. As the second chart below illustrates, circulation by month generally decreased compared to corresponding month from the 2011-2012 fiscal year to the 2012-2013 fiscal year, particularly in August and March.

Circulation by Month, January 2010 - June 2013

Circulation by Month, Two-Year Comparison

■ 2011 - 2012
■ 2012 - 2013

Circulation of Books, January 2010 - June 2013

Circulation of books is greatest during summer months, likely due to the summer reading program and an overall increase in leisure time. As the chart below shows, circulation of audiobooks has remained fairly consistent during the past three years, with a slight decline in recent months. A decline in circulation may be expected if residents begin to obtain audiobooks electronically.

Circulation of Audiobooks, January 2010 - June 2013

Circulation of DVDs, January 2010 - June 2013
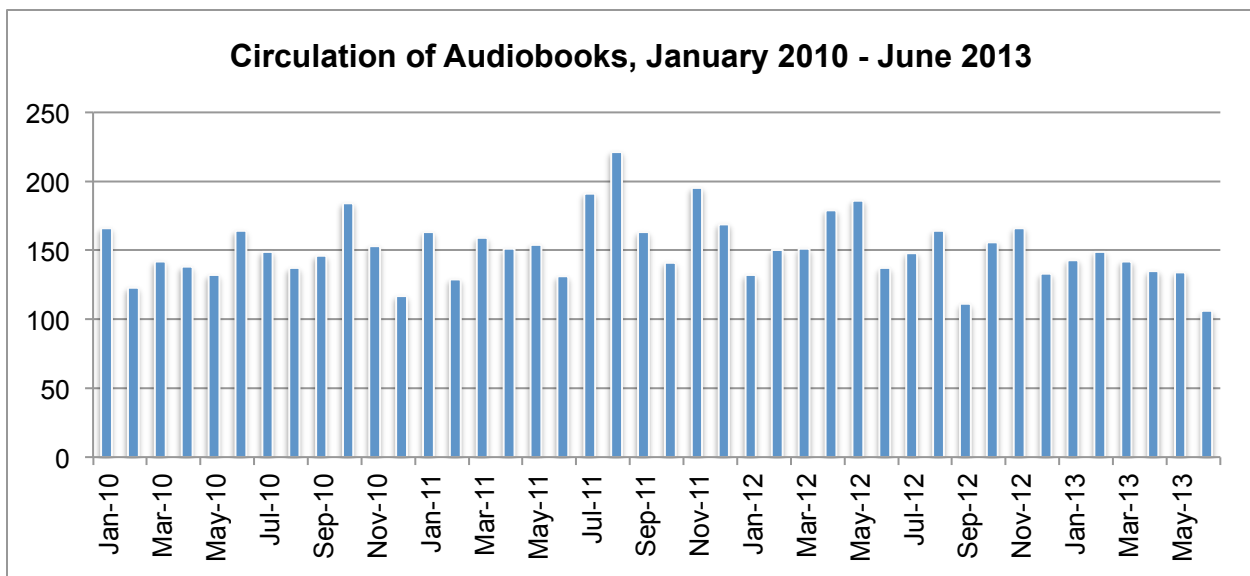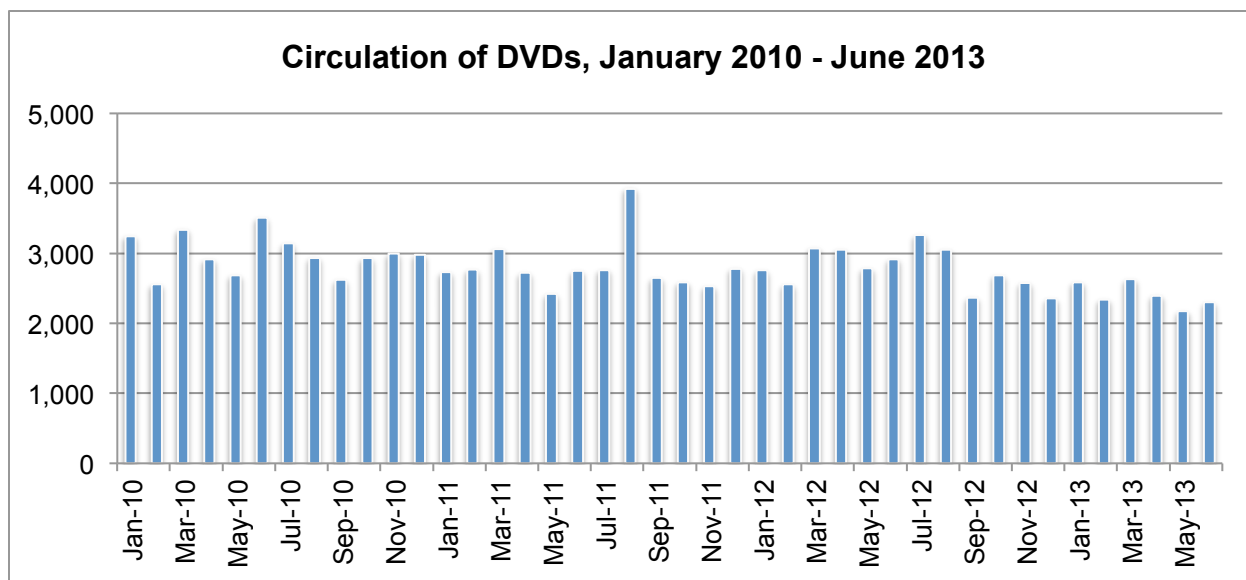
As the chart above shows, circulation of DVDs remained fairly consistent until a drop in September 2012. While DVD circulation has remained stable since that time, it is still lower than previous years. However, DVD circulation is occasionally greater than circulation of books, including a four-month period from February 2013 through May 2013.

Circulation of music CDs, as displayed in the chart below, has steadily decreased during the past three years, aside from a spike in circulation during January 2011. This trend of less usage of music CDs is common throughout the library industry, likely as a result of the availability of music from digital providers.

Circulation of Music CDs, January 2010 - June 2013
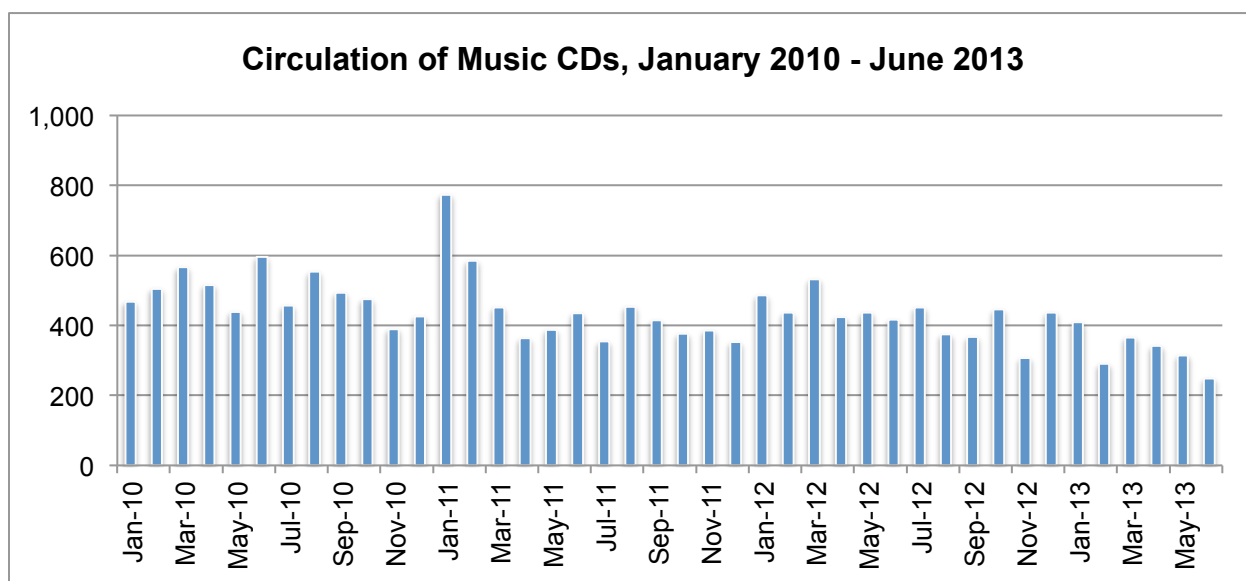
|	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	% Change From FY 2010-2011 to FY 2012-2013
BOOKS				
Adult Fiction	7,965	7,522	6,607	-17.05%
Adult Nonfiction	7,031	6,501	5,902	-16.06%
Juvenile Fiction	14,686	14,146	14,776	0.61%
Juvenile Nonfiction	4,925	3,770	3,875	-21.32%
ELECTRONIC AND A/V				
Adult Audiobook Fiction	1,343	1,381	1,232	-8.27%
Adult Audiobook Nonfiction	206	226	231	12.14%
Adult DVD Fiction	26,517	24,909	23,244	-12.34%
Adult DVD Nonfiction	1,166	1,583	1,178	1.03%
Adult TV	2,570	2,608	2,453	-4.55%
Adult WII DS Games	2,975	3,252	3,013	1.28%
Adult Music CD	5,307	4,786	4,462	-15.92%
Juvenile Audiobook Fiction	226	370	307	35.84%
Juvenile Audiobook Nonfiction	9	0	0	-100.00%
Juvenile DVD Fiction	3,867	3,730	3,964	2.51%
Juvenile DVD Nonfiction	3,530	3,622	3,562	0.91%
Juvenile Music CD	697	251	179	-74.32%
RECIPROCAL BORROWING				
Other Library Patrons at Hillside	22,612	19,830	17,483	-22.68%
Hillside Patrons at Other Libraries	13,235	11,108	10,390	-21.50%
INTERLIBRARY LOAN				
Received From Other Libraries	9,450	7,958	9,252	-2.10%
Sent to Other Libraries	13,676	15,158	14,479	5.87%
TOTAL CIRCULATION	**83,020**	**78,657**	**74,985**	**-9.68%**

Reciprocal Borrowing, January 2010 - June 2013

Legend: Other Library Patrons at Hillside | Hillside Patrons at Other Libraries
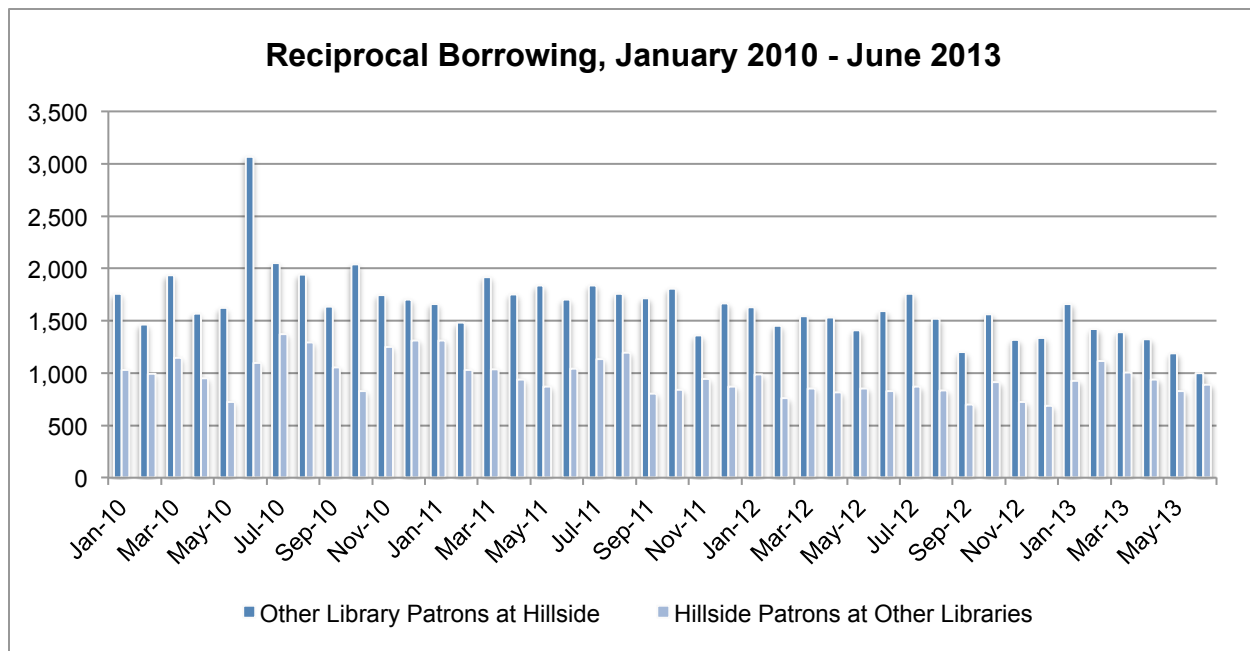
Reciprocal borrowing during FY 2012 – 2013 has decreased slightly from previous years. Please note that the dramatic increase in other library patrons using Hillside Public Library during the summer of 2010 was due to renovations occurring at Bellwood Public Library, at which time Hillside Public Library serviced those patrons affected. For every month of data displayed above, there were more external patrons using Hillside Public Library than Hillside patrons using other libraries. Similarly, as the chart below illustrates, more materials are sent from Hillside Public Library to other libraries than are received from other libraries by Hillside Public Library via interlibrary loans.

Interlibrary Loans, January 2010 - June 2013

Legend: Materials Received From Other Libraries | Materials Sent to Other Libraries
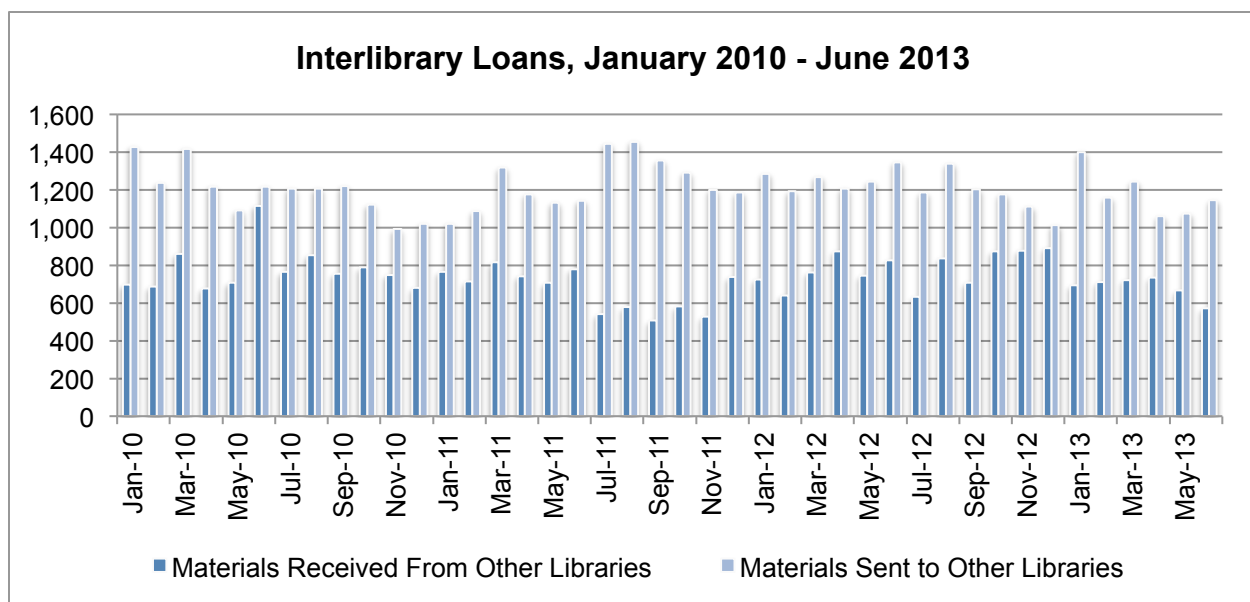
Demographic Analysis

The following pages contain visual representations of various demographics throughout the Hillside Public Library district. As the following information presented reveals, the library district has not experienced significant population growth since the 2000 U.S. Census but has developed an increasingly diverse resident base.

Hillside Population by Age, 2000 and 2010
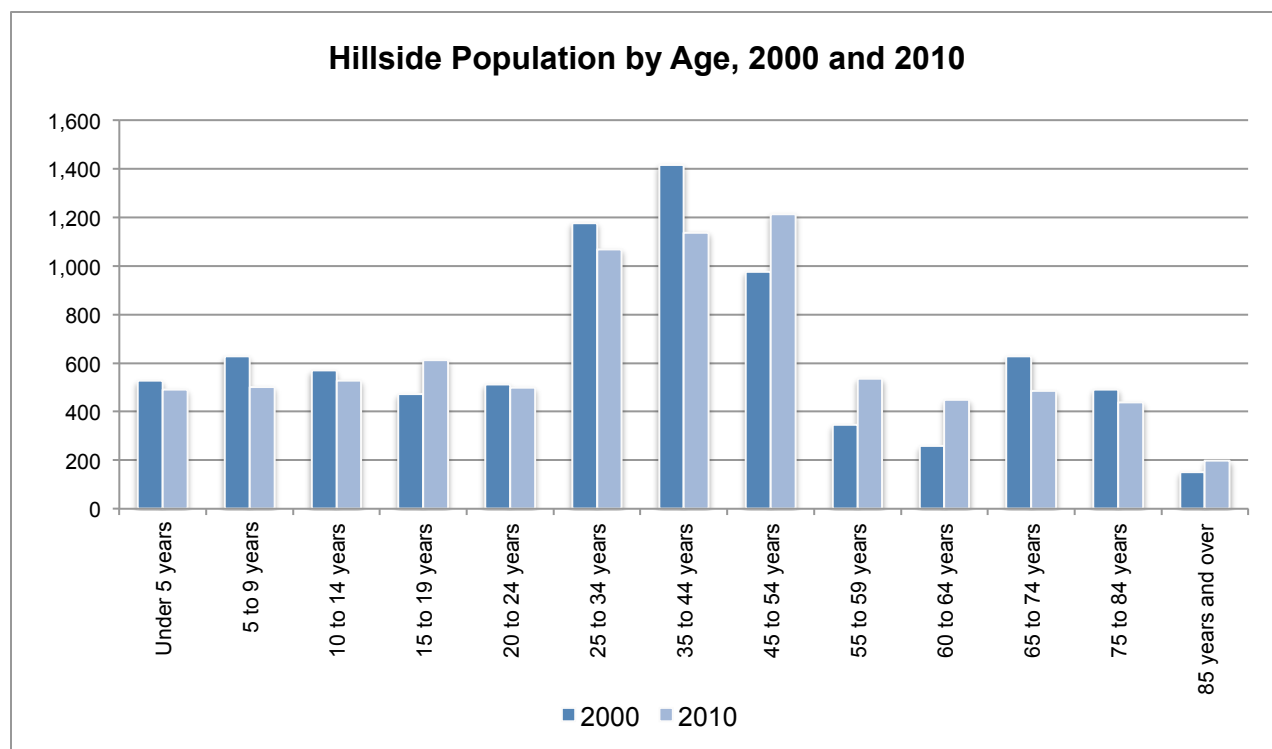
Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 U.S. Census.

The total population of Hillside remained nearly identical between 2000 and 2010, with 8,155 residents in 2000 and 8,157 residents in 2010. The maps included on the following pages illustrate geographic change in the Hillside population, including an increase in diversity while maintaining a stable total population.

As the chart above shows, overall, the population of Hillside aged between the years 2000 and 2010. According to the U.S. Census, the median age of Hillside residents increased from 36.3 years in 2000 to 38.6 years in 2010. Similarly, the percentage of the population that comprised children under age 18 decreased slightly from 2000 to 2010, from 24.7% to 23.4%. The 45 to 59 years age group saw the largest increase in population between 2000 and 2010, from 12.0% to 14.9% of the total population.

Map of Population

The black dot in the following maps represents the location of Hillside Public Library.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010. Data is presented by Census block.

2000   **2010**

	< 20
	20 – 40
	40 – 80
	80 – 120
	≥ 120

	< 20
	20 – 40
	40 – 80
	80 – 120
	≥ 120
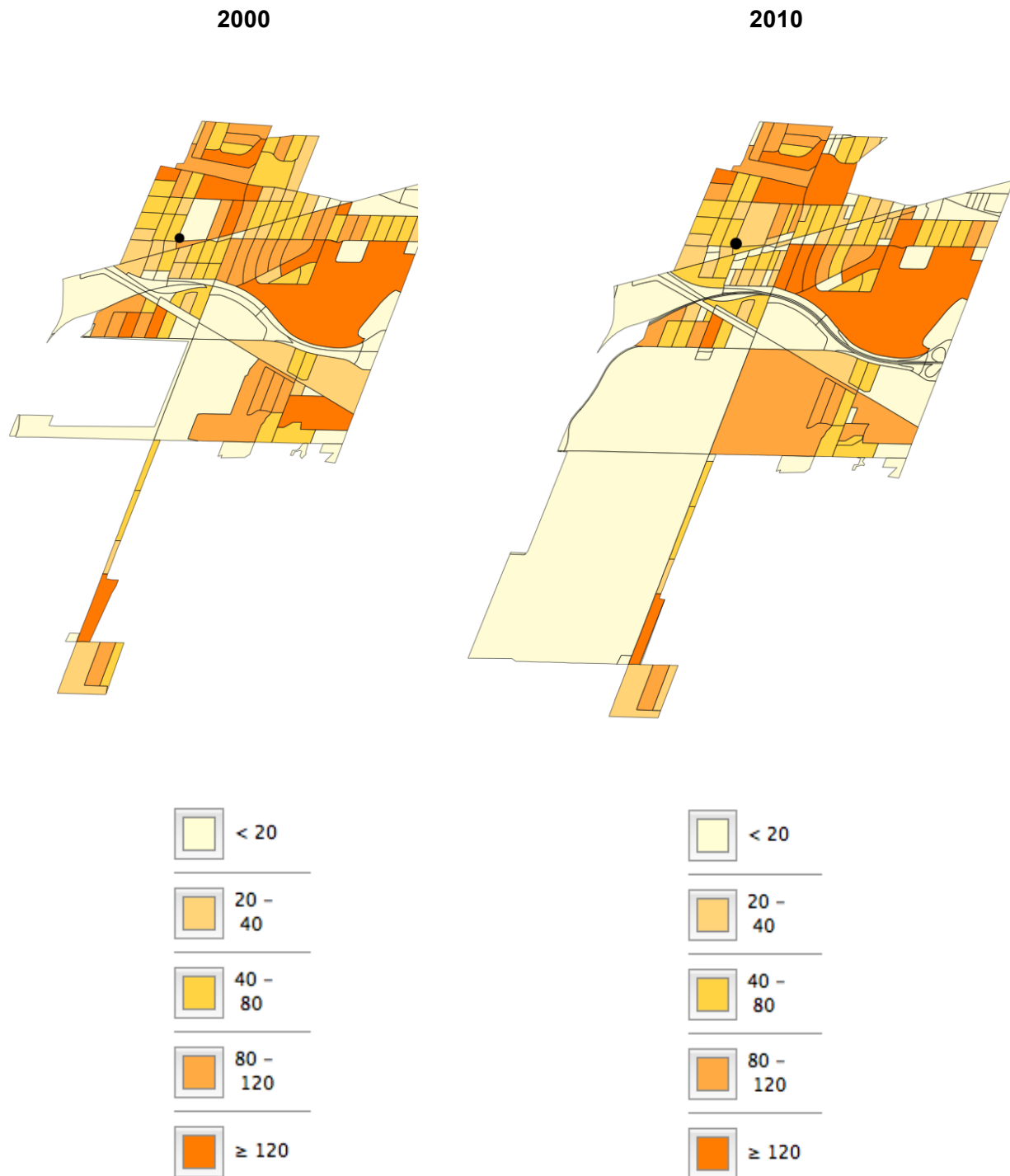
Map of Percent Hispanic or Latino

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010. Data is presented by Census block.

2000

2010

	< 0%
	0% – 5%
	5% – 15%
	15% – 25%
	≥ 25%

	< 0%
	0% – 5%
	5% – 15%
	15% – 25%
	≥ 25%
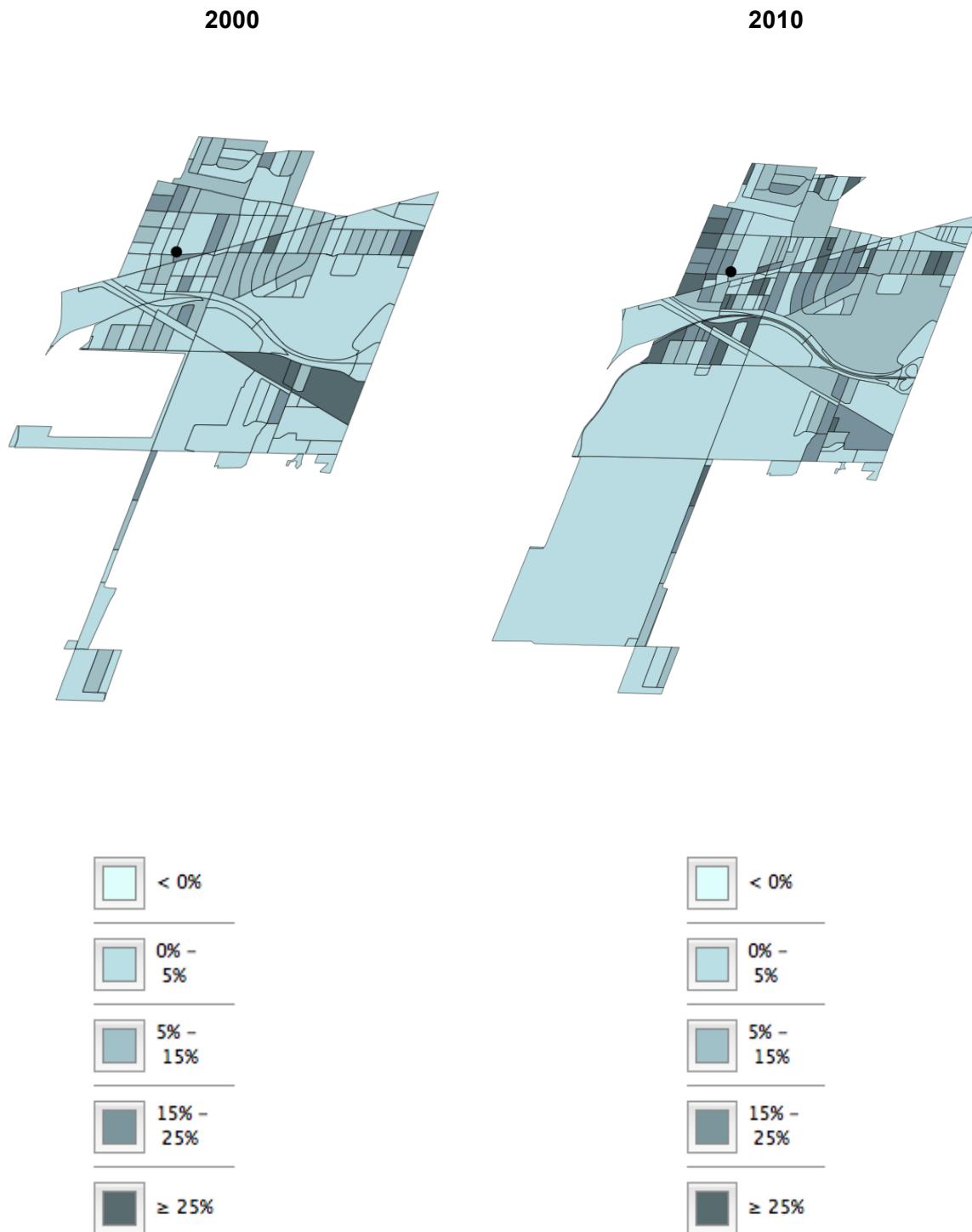
Map of Percent Black/African-American

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010. Data is presented by Census block.

2000

2010

< 0%	< 0%
0% – 20%	0% – 20%
20% – 40%	20% – 40%
40% – 60%	40% – 60%
≥ 60%	≥ 60%

Hillside Population by Race, 2000

- White — 49%
- Black or African-American — 37%
- American Indian and Alaska Native — 0%
- Asian — 5%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander — 0%
- Some Other Race — 6%
- Two or More Races — 3%

Hillside Population by Race, 2010

- White — 38%
- Black or African-American — 43%
- American Indian and Alaska Native — 0%
- Asian — 4%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander — 0%
- Some Other Race — 12%
- Two or More Races — 3%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 U.S. Census.

As the charts above show, the population of Hillside has become more diverse between 2000 and 2010. The percentage of the population identifying as black or African-American increased from 36.9% in 2000 to 43.2% in 2010. The percentage of the population identifying as white decreased from 49.3% in 2000 to 37.7% in 2010. The percentage of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino increased the most during this time period. In 2000, 1,068 residents in Hillside identified as Hispanic or Latino, a number that increased by more than 110% to 2,252 residents in 2010. In 2010, residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino comprised 27.6% of the Hillside population.

Comparison to Other Geographies
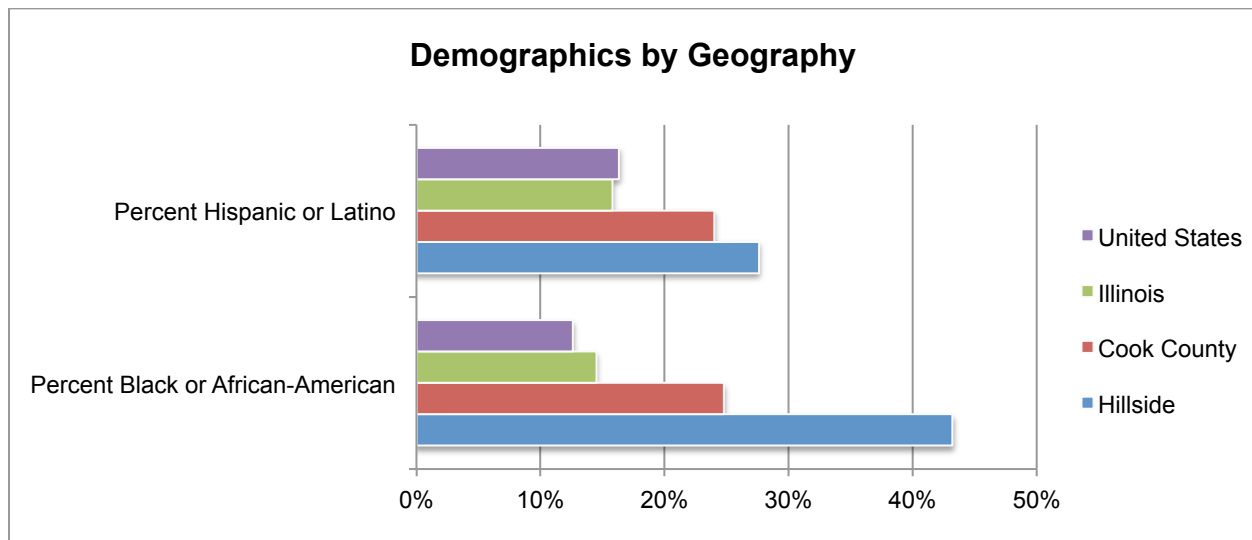
Demographics by Geography

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 U.S. Census.

Percent of Adults 25 Years and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

Median Household Income by Geography
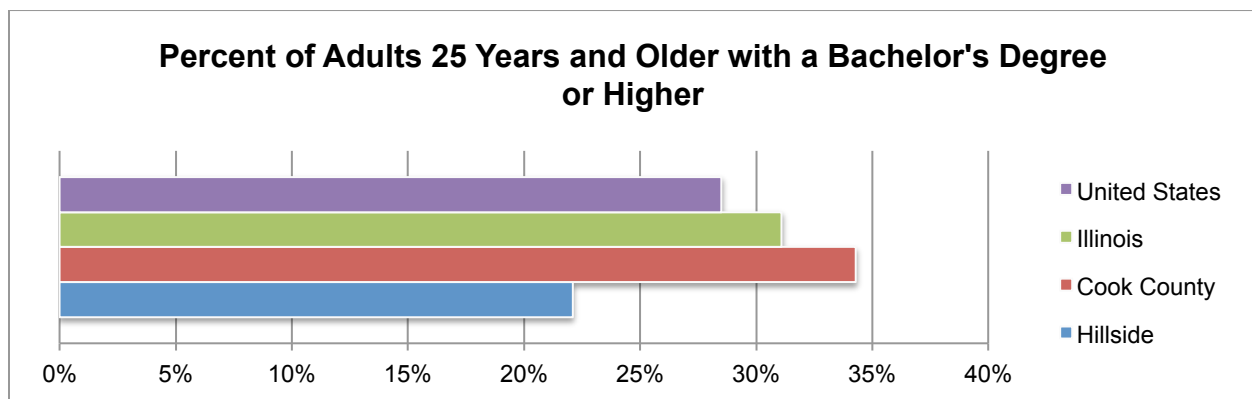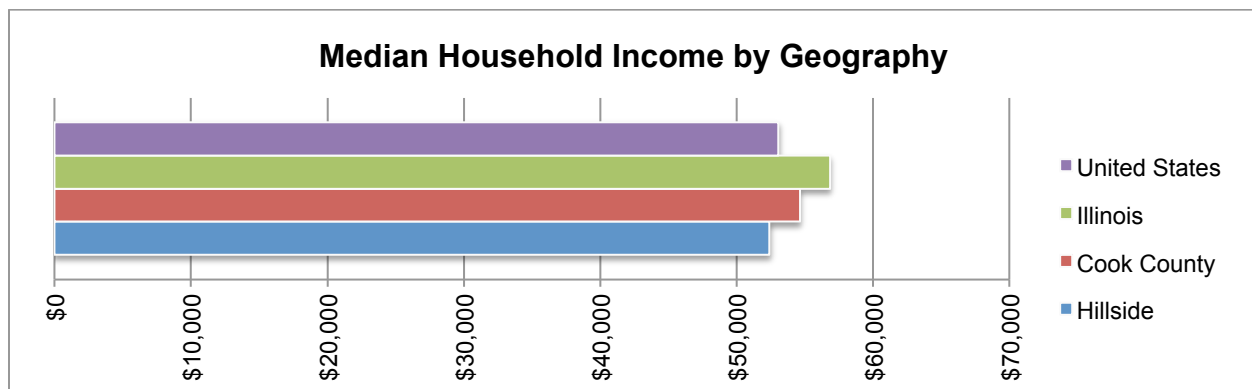
Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

Social Demographic Profile of Hillside

Educational Attainment for Hillside Population 25 Years and Older

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

As the chart above shows, 81.7% of the Hillside population 25 years and older are high school graduates or equivalent. Of adults 25 years and older, 22.1% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, while an additional 9.0% hold an associate's degree. In addition, 23.5% of the population 25 years and older have attended some college but do not hold a degree.

Languages Spoken At Home for Population 5 Years and Older

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

As the chart on the previous page shows, the majority of the Hillside population five years and older speak only English at home, though 26.0% speak Spanish at home. 2,591 individuals five years and older speak a language other than English at home, and of those, 41.8% speak English less than "very well." According to the 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 8.1% of households in Hillside are considered "linguistically isolated," in which no one aged 14 and over speaks English only or speaks a language other than English at home and speaks English "very well." The following table displays the languages spoken at home for the population five years and over.

Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for Population 5 Years and Over

Language	Speak English "Very Well"	Speak English Less Than "Very Well"	Total
Speak only English	n/a	n/a	5.101
Spanish or Spanish Creole	1,097 (54.9%)	902 (45.1%)	1,999
French (incl. Patois, Cajun)	11 (27.5%)	29 (72.5%)	40
French Creole	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	7
Italian	12 (42.9%)	16 (57.1%)	28
German	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	8
Greek	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	15
Russian	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	3
Polish	29 (43.3%)	38 (56.7%)	67
Hindi	38 (74.5%)	13 (25.5%)	51
Other Indic languages	53 (66.3%)	27 (33.8%)	80
Korean	26 (65.0%)	14 (35.0%)	40
Other Asian languages	48 (100%)	0 (0%)	48
Tagalog	92 (69.2%)	41 (30.8%)	133
African languages	25 (100%)	0 (0%)	25
Other and unspecified languages	47 (100%)	0 (0%)	47

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

Economic Demographic Profile of Hillside
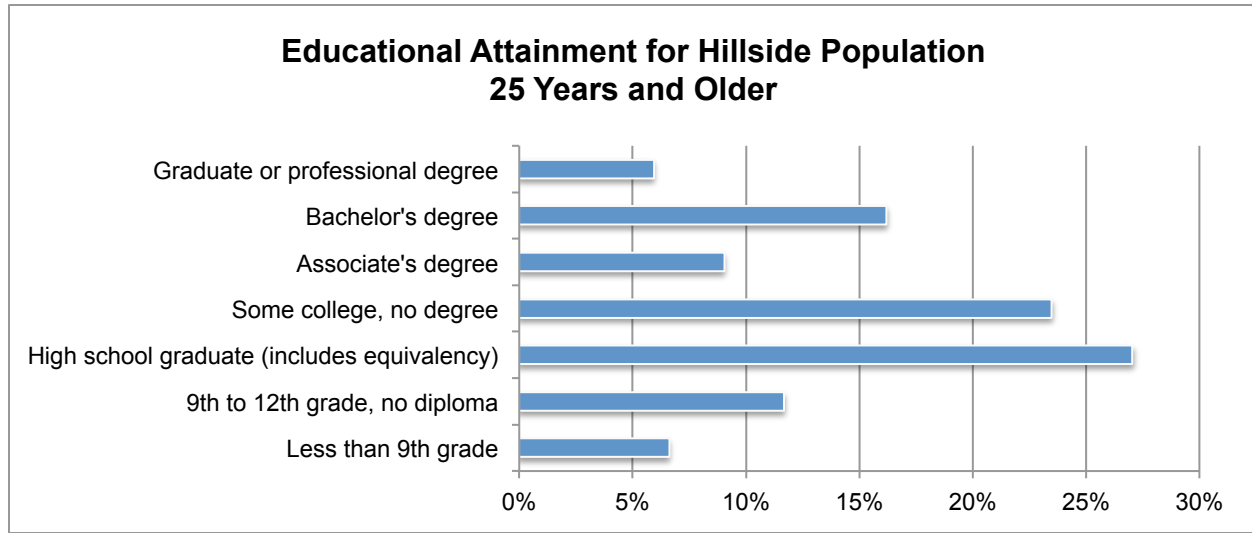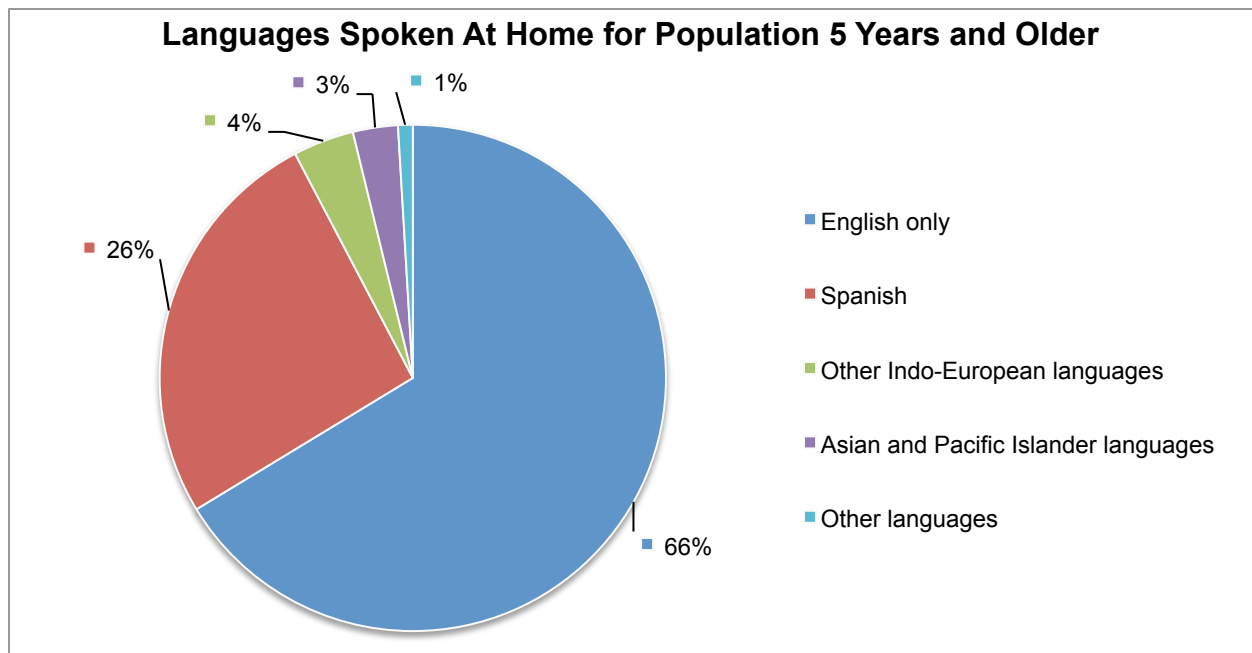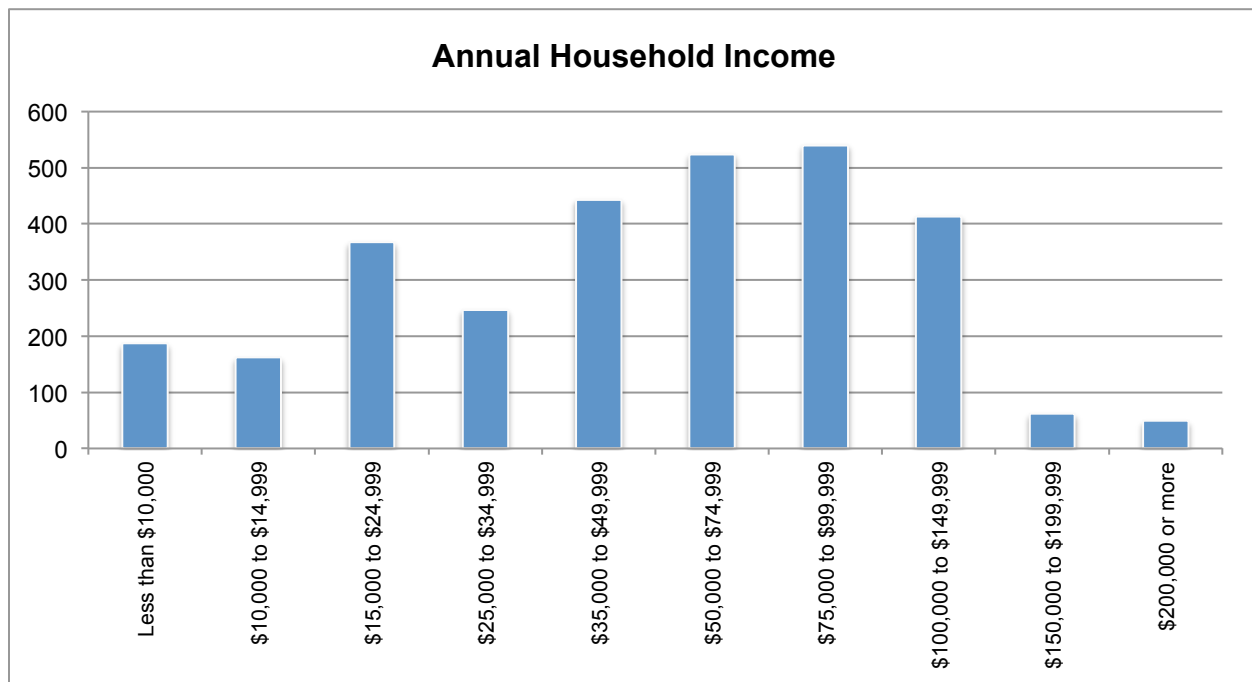
Annual Household Income

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, the median household income in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars for households in Hillside was $52,395. As the table below shows, 23.6% of children under 18 years were living below the poverty level. In addition, 11.9% of households in Hillside received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months.

Percent of People Living Below the Poverty Level During the Past 12 Months

Age range	Percent of People Living Below Poverty Level
Under 18 years	23.6%
18 to 64 years	13.0%
65 years and over	7.6%

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

Industries of Employed Population 16 Years and Over
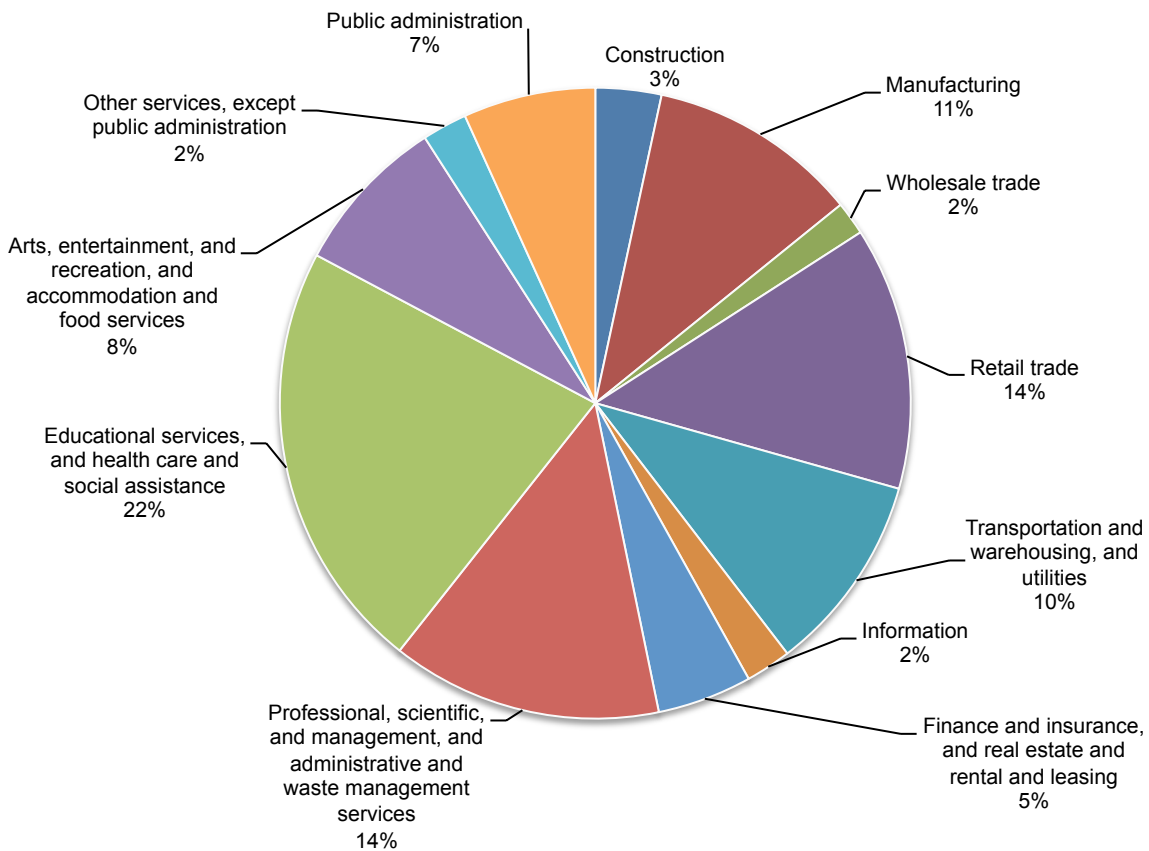
Public administration
7%

Construction
3%

Manufacturing
11%

Other services, except
public administration
2%

Wholesale trade
2%

Arts, entertainment, and
recreation, and
accommodation and
food services
8%

Retail trade
14%

Educational services,
and health care and
social assistance
22%

Transportation and
warehousing, and
utilities
10%

Information
2%

Finance and insurance,
and real estate and
rental and leasing
5%

Professional, scientific,
and management, and
administrative and
waste management
services
14%

Source: 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, the most common industry in which Hillside residents were employed was educational services, and health care and social assistance (22.1%). Other industries that commonly employed the Hillside population 16 years and over included professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (13.9%); retail trade (13.5%); manufacturing (10.9%); and transportation and warehousing, and utilities (10.2%).
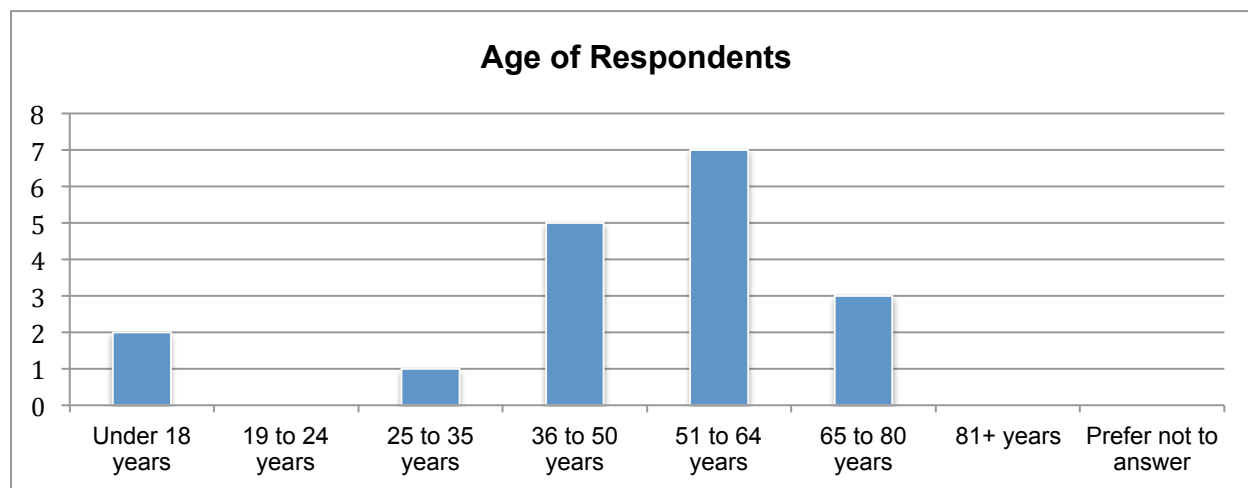
Community Surveys

Email Survey

An email survey was distributed to approximately 261 patrons with email addresses on file with Hillside Public Library on September 12, 2013, which was administered using online survey tool SurveyMonkey. After accounting for 45 emails that bounced back, 20 of 216 individuals who received the survey responded to it (9.26% response rate).

Demographics

Nineteen of the 20 respondents identified their gender; 73.68% of respondents were female, and 26.32% were male. Of the survey respondents who identified their race, 52.63% were white/Caucasian, 42.11% were black/African-American, and 5.26% were Hispanic or Latino. More than 68% of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher. The majority of respondents were between 36 and 64 years of age, as illustrated by the chart below.

Age of Respondents

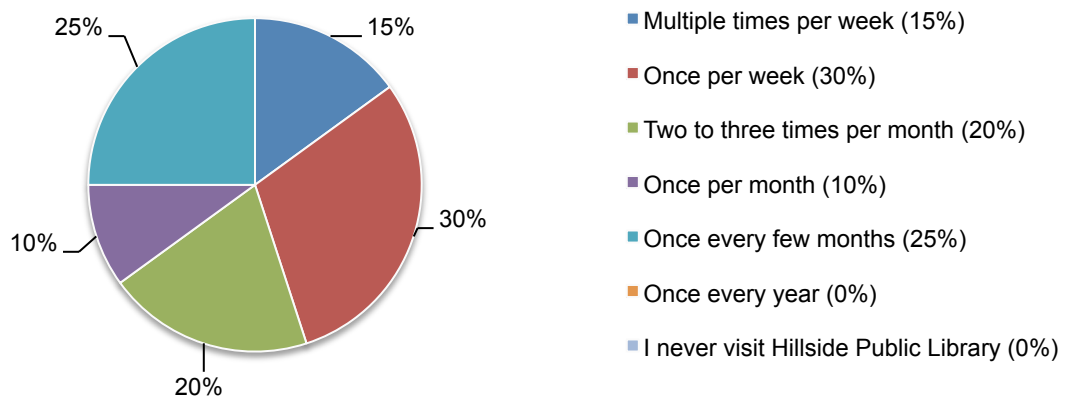| Age Range	Number
Under 18 years	2
19 to 24 years	0
25 to 35 years	1
36 to 50 years	5
51 to 64 years	7
65 to 80 years	3
81+ years	0
Prefer not to answer	0

Survey respondents reported speaking the following languages other than English at home:

| Language	Number of Respondents
American Sign Language	1
Arabic	1
French	2
Spanish	2

It is important to note that the email survey was provided only in English, which may have prohibited residents who do not speak English from responding.

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How often do you visit Hillside Public Library?

25% 15%

30%

10%

20%

- Multiple times per week (15%)
- Once per week (30%)
- Two to three times per month (20%)
- Once per month (10%)
- Once every few months (25%)
- Once every year (0%)
- I never visit Hillside Public Library (0%)

Survey respondents most frequently reported visiting Hillside Public Library one time per week (30% of respondents). Twenty-five percent of survey respondents reported visiting the library once every few months. Sixty-five percent of respondents visit the library at least two to three times per month. No survey respondents reported visiting the library fewer than once every few months.

Which types of materials have you checked out during the past six months?
Please check all that apply.
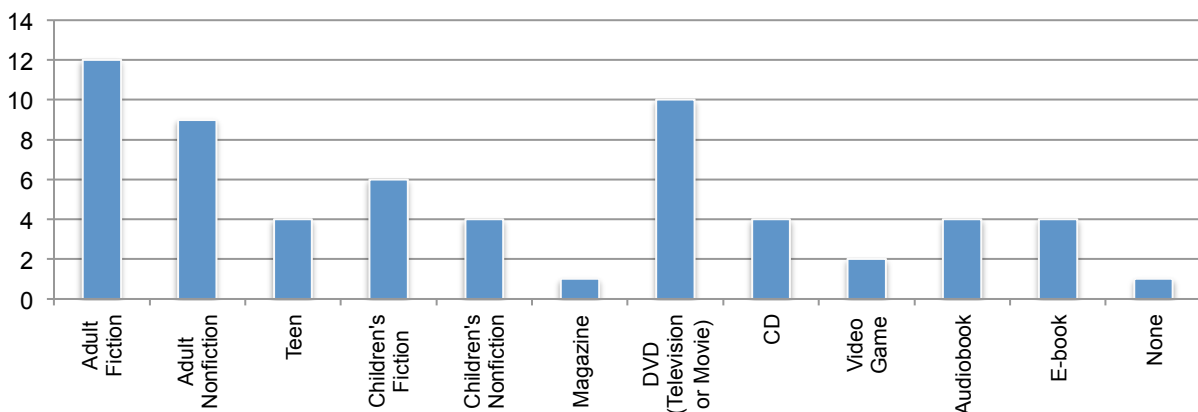
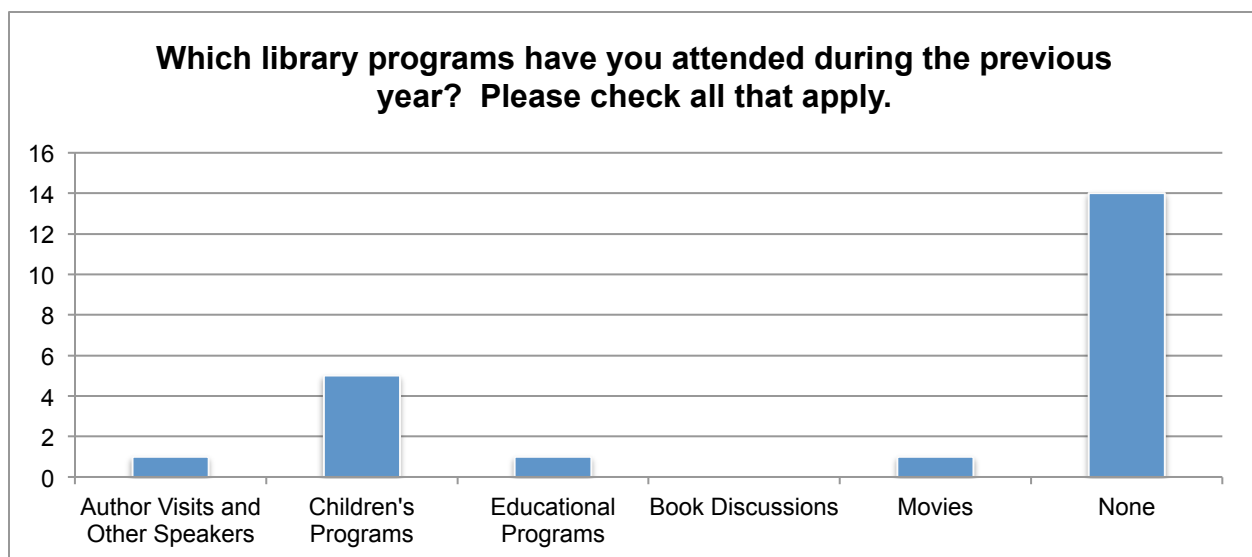Survey respondents reported that books and DVDs were the most common materials they had checked out during the past six months, as illustrated by the chart above. Specifically, adult fiction books were the most common materials checked out, mirroring the circulation trends discussed earlier. Magazines were the least common materials to be checked out by survey respondents during the past six months.

Which library services have you used during the past six months? Please check all that apply.
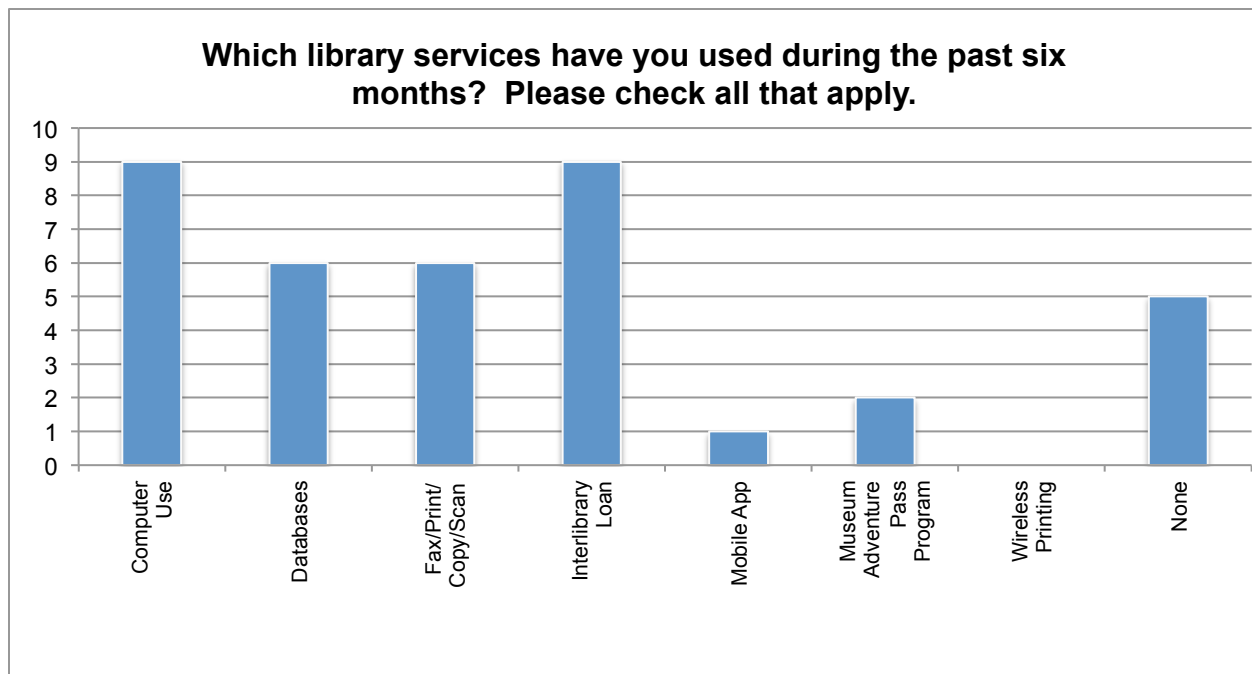
As the chart above illustrates, survey respondents reported that they were most likely to have used the computers at the library and interlibrary loan services during the past six months. Other library services survey respondents using included databases and fax/print/copy/scan services. Twenty-five percent of survey respondents reported that they had not used any library services during the past six months.

As the chart below shows, only 20% of survey respondents reported attending a library program during the previous year. Of the programs reportedly attended, children's programs were the most common.

Which library programs have you attended during the previous year? Please check all that apply.

Twenty-five percent of the survey respondents reported having children under age 13. Of these respondents, 40% reported attending arts and crafts programs, 40% reported attending storytime, 80% reported attending summer reading programs, and 0% reported attending no programs at the library.

Twenty-one percent of the survey respondents reported having children between the ages of 13 and 18. Of these respondents, 20% reported attending arts and crafts programs; 20% reported attending movies; 40% reported visiting the library to study, read, and/or socialize; 40% reported attending summer reading programs; and 20% reported attending no programs at the library.

Participants were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were neutral regarding five statements regarding their opinions of the library. Responses were predominantly positive regarding all five statements:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find the programs offered through the library to be interesting and relevant.	9 (47.37%)	5 (26.32%)	5 (26.32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I would recommend the library to my neighbors.	12 (63.16%)	5 (26.32%)	2 (10.53%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The library's physical space meets my needs.	8 (42.11%)	7 (36.84%)	1 (5.26%)	3 (15.79%)	0 (0%)
The library meets all of my expectations.	8 (42.11%)	6 (31.58%)	5 (26.32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The library is a vital part of my life.	10 (52.63%)	4 (21.05%)	5 (26.32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

More than 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they found the programs offered through the library to be interesting and relevant, although only 20% expressed earlier that they had attended a program in the past six months. More than 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the library to their neighbors. Some respondents expressed discontent with the library's physical space meeting their needs (approximately 16% disagreed with the statement above). Overall, respondents felt that the library meets all of their expectations (73% agreed or strongly agreed), and approximately 73% either agreed or strongly agreed that the library is a vital part of their lives.

As displayed by the table below, the community most highly values the library's availability of materials, staff helpfulness, type of materials, and location. Serving as a resource for community information, accessibility to technology, the library's physical space were also cited, though less frequently. Of the options provided, public programs were valued the least.

What do you value most about the library? Please check all that apply.

Response	Number of Responses
Availability of materials	13
Staff helpfulness	12
Type of materials	12
Location	10
Resource for community information	8
Accessibility to technology	6
Physical space	6
Public programs	3

Patrons were also asked to provide feedback on how they prefer to receive communications from the library, as displayed in the table below, which could be influenced by the online nature of the survey.

How do you prefer to receive news and information about the library? Please check all that apply.

Response	Number of Responses
Email	16
Mailed newsletter	12
Website	3
Local newspaper	1
Twitter	1
Facebook	0
Other social media	0

The following suggestions were provided most frequently (please note that these comments are reproduced without editing, unless denoted by brackets):
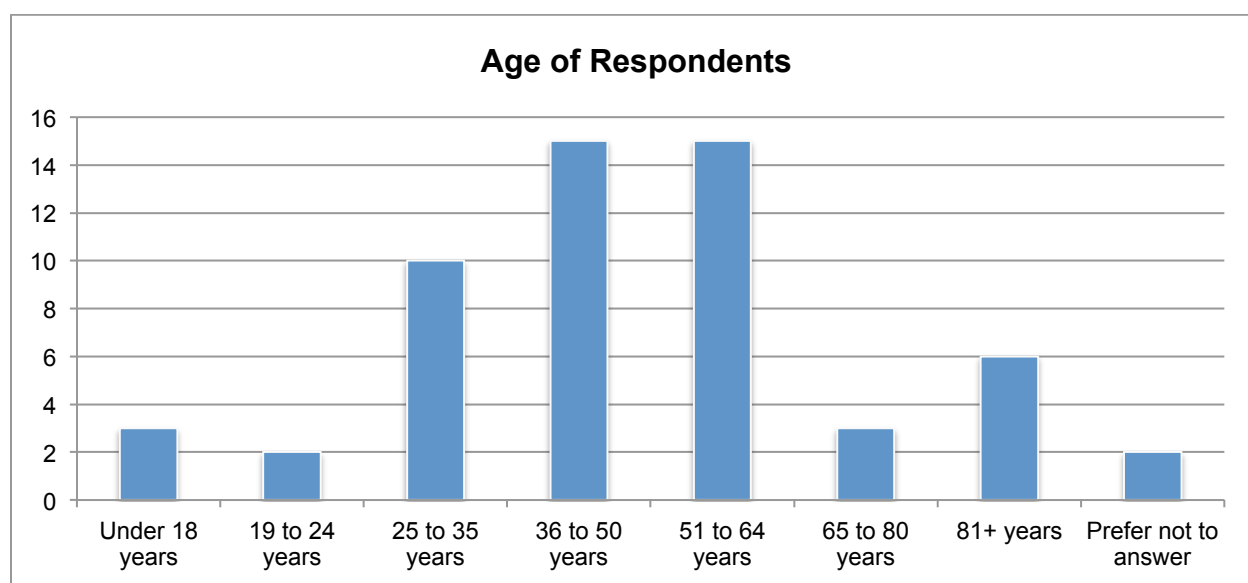
- "Newer and larger study rooms."
- "Yes, unfortunately front desk staff is [in some occasions] not very helpful."
- "Special recognition to the young man at the check out desk, very pleasant! Great working with him, always makes us patrons feel welcomed."
- "The library carpeting seems old and dated. Each time I enter the library, I think how much more inviting and refreshed it would be if the carpeting were updated."

Mail Survey

Another survey was mailed to residents in November 2013. An identical survey was available online for residents who preferred an online format, and a total of 57 responses were collected.

Demographics

As noted in the charts below, the majority of survey respondents were between 25 and 64 years of age. Over 32% of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher, and nearly 75% had at least some college coursework experience.

Age of Respondents

Age Group	Count
Under 18 years	3
19 to 24 years	2
25 to 35 years	10
36 to 50 years	15
51 to 64 years	15
65 to 80 years	3
81+ years	6
Prefer not to answer	2

Highest Level of Education Attained by Respondents

- Less than a high school diploma or equivalent (5.45%)
- High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED) (18.18%)
- Some college (no degree) (25.45%)
- Associate's degree (16.36%)
- Bachelor's degree (20%)
- Master's degree (12.73%)
- Doctoral degree (0%)
- Prefer not to answer (1.82%)

When asked how often they visit Hillside Public Library, half of the survey respondents said they visit multiple times per week (50%). More than 16% of respondents said they visit the library once per month or less frequently, including never visiting the library.

How often do you visit Hillside Public Library?

- Multiple times per week (50%)
- Once per week (21.43%)
- Two to three times per month (12.50%)
- Once per month (7.14%)
- Once every few months (5.36%)
- Once every year (1.79%)
- I never visit the library (1.79%)
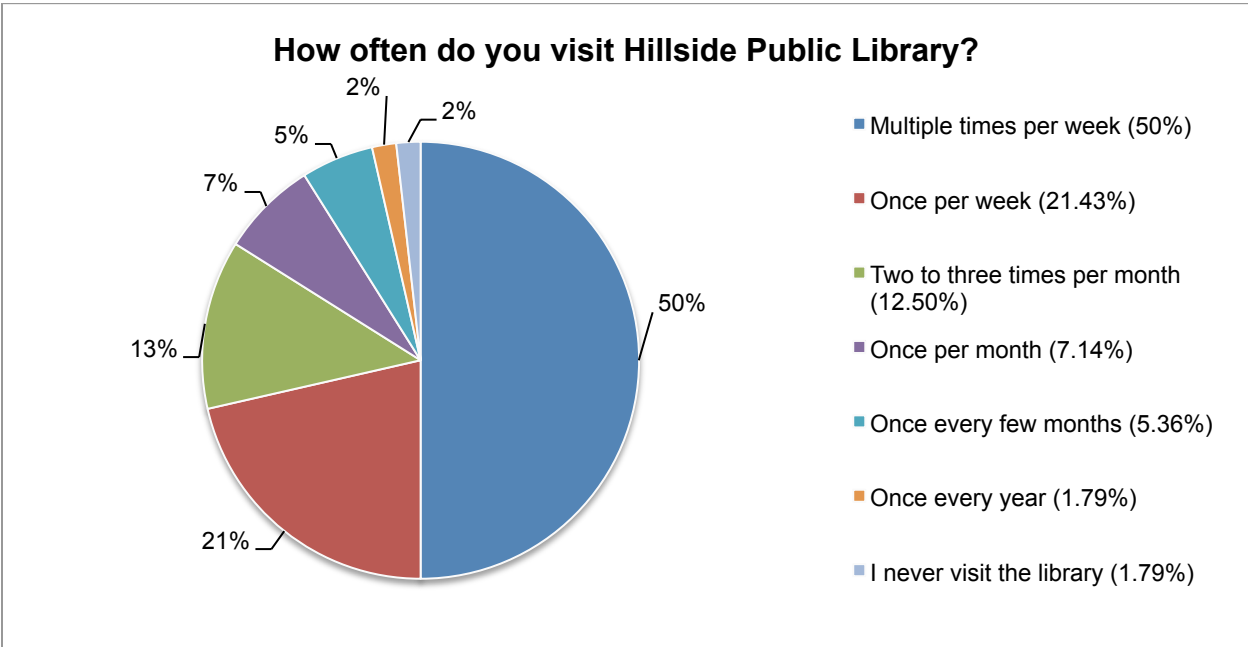
When asked what the primary reasons for visiting the library were, the majority of respondents indicated that borrowing books, DVDs, and other materials was the predominant reason for visiting the library, as illustrated in the chart below.

**Which are your primary reasons for visiting the library?
(Please check all that apply.)**

Reason	Value
To take my children to visit the library	13
To do research or find information	21
To meet with others	6
To attend programs	20
To study, read, or work in a quiet environment	14
To use the Wi-Fi	8
To use the copy machine	25
To use the computers	29
To borrow other materials	18
To borrow DVDs	38
To borrow books	38

Use of technology, such as computers and the copy machine were also popular reasons for visiting the library. While several respondents cited taking their children to the library as a primary reason for visiting, few individuals indicated that meeting with others was a main reason for visiting the library. Three survey respondents noted in the comments section that another primary reason they visited the library was to read current issues of the newspapers.

Several respondents also provided answers to the question, "Which factors prevent you from using the library more often?" A few survey respondents cited limited access to transportation, inconvenient location, and inconvenient hours as reasons for not visiting the library more often, but the primary reasons given were the perception that the library does not have the materials that residents want and that they find materials they need elsewhere. Several respondents also noted in the comments section that finding time in busy schedules also prohibited them from visiting the library more frequently. Such comments included: "busy work schedule," "no time," "just life – nothing to do with library," "work/school," and "lack of time." Other reasons given included: "technology, scanner not up to par," "need improvement in Spanish collection," and "would like more up to date material."

Participants were also asked to rank which aspects of the library they valued most, on a scale of 1 through 8, with 1 representing the most valued aspect and 8 the least. Survey respondents ranked the availability of materials, the location of the library, and staff helpfulness as the most valued aspects of the library. Respondents consistently rated the physical space of the library to meet with others among the lowest valued aspects, and when aggregated, the physical space of the library to meet with others ranked last, as displayed in the table below.

Please rank what you value most about the library from 1 to 8
(1 = most valued, 8 = least valued)

Response	Average Score
Availability of materials	3.24
Location	3.58
Staff helpfulness	3.63
Accessibility to technology	4.13
Public programs	4.71
Types of materials available	5.26
Resource for community information	5.29
Physical space to meet with others	6.16

While survey respondents largely preferred to receive news and information about the library through the mailed newsletter, over 37% respondents said they preferred email communications either singularly or in addition to the mailed newsletter. Survey participants also desired learning about the library on its website and in a local newspaper, but few respondents preferred learning news and information about the library via social media outlets such as Facebook or Twitter, as displayed in the table below.

How do you prefer to receive news and information about the library? Please check all that apply.

Response	Number of Responses
Mailed newsletter	41
Email	20
Website	16
Local newspaper	11
Facebook	4
Other social media	2
Twitter	0

Participants were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were neutral regarding five statements regarding their opinions of the library. Responses were predominantly positive regarding all five statements:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find the programs offered through the library to be interesting and relevant.	30 (55.56%)	15 (27.78%)	8 (14.81%)	1 (1.85%)	0 (0%)
I would recommend the library to my neighbors.	42 (79.25%)	10 (18.87%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.89%)	0 (0%)
The library's physical space meets my needs.	27 (50.00%)	19 (35.19%)	4 (7.41%)	1 (1.85%)	3 (5.56%)
The library meets all of my expectations.	26 (49.06%)	22 (41.51%)	4 (7.55%)	1 (1.89%)	0 (0%)
The library is a vital part of my life.	35 (63.64%)	10 (18.18%)	8 (14.55%)	2 (3.64%)	0 (0%)

More than 83% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they found the programs offered through the library to be interesting and relevant. More than 98% of respondents said they would recommend the library to their neighbors, and nearly 82% of respondents felt the library is a vital part of their lives. Approximately 85% of survey respondents felt that the library's physical space meets their needs, although over 7% disagreed or strongly agreed with the statement. More than 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the library meets all of their expectations.

When asked which barriers or difficulties residents have encountered while using the library, few respondents cited any negative obstacles, although some responses suggested improving computer services. Comments expressed frustration with computer sessions running out of time, and other respondents suggested the library position a staff member in the computer area. Such comments included: "computers running out of time during my session," "great computer lab but no staff back in lab – annoying if you need to add money to print or have a problem with computer," "assigned [seating] at computers," and "can't access your stuff when the computer logs off."

Other barriers or difficulties encountered while using the library included:

- "Lack of staff, no one available"
- "Bathroom requirements"
- "Sometimes parking"
- "Poor snow and ice removal in winter"
- "Long wait for book or item"
- "I love [to] read, but I wish you [would] have more Spanish books"
- "Would like more up to date materials on 'do it yourself' electrical, plumbing, mower repairs, and heating and air conditioning around home and for small commercial type repairs"
- Availability of college study material"
- "Uncomfortable chairs"
- "Could use Wi-Fi in basement, need heat, and better chairs would be lovely"
- "Comfortable chairs"
- "When I come to a class, the metal chairs are [a] discomfort"
- "Parking"

When asked if residents had any suggestions for improving library services, respondents expressed interest in more materials. Suggestions for improvement included:

- "Keep it quiet"
- "There should not be a limit to computer use for adults as long as no one else is waiting to use"
- "More books and movies"
- "More room for more movies and books"
- "A little clean up, sometimes kids come here to talk and that is disruptive to those who are around. Also, many times I see people with food and drinks"
- "Have the computer lab staffed, the staff you have has always been polite and helpful"
- "Just 1 or 2 more computer instructors"
- "Current movies or something uplifting and funny"

- "Turn the heat on in the basement please"

- "Comfortable chairs for downstairs"

- "Updating furniture, like chairs"

- "When groups meet for a period of time they need to be comfortable"

- "More access to PS3 video games"

- "More after hours adult programs"

- "A way to drop off materials without leaving your car"

- "Expand Spanish collection"

- "Continue to offer your professionalism, services, programs to the Hillside community!"

Community Focus Groups

Five focus groups were held on October 8, 2013 with stakeholders of Hillside Public Library:

- Patrons (two groups)
- Community leaders
- Library staff members
- Hillside Public Library Board of Trustees

Focus groups lasted approximately one hour each and were conducted in a library meeting area in a discussion-style format. Patron participants were solicited via the email survey and provided their names, email addresses, and daytime phone numbers if they were interested in participating in a focus group. Twenty-three individuals participated in the focus groups.

Focus group participants felt that there is an opportunity for the library to serve as more of a community center space due to its existing "city center atmosphere" and conduciveness to offering community meeting space. Participants said they "appreciated the library's Sunday hours." Staff, community leaders, and patrons alike considered the library's small size to be an asset. Community leaders praised the library's location, noting that it is "walkable," "local, accessible, easy to get to," and "viewed as a nice and safe place to go." Focus group participants suggested that the library fills the gap left by bookstores that have since gone out of business in the area, though some parents felt that the "school library replaces the public library for some kids." Others added that there are "no hang out places in Hillside" and the library could fill that role for children and young adults in the community.

Community leaders, who included local school and village officials, suggested several ideas for partnerships that may benefit the library and increase the number of patrons who use its services. Such suggestions included:

- Hosting career exploration events for teens and high school students with young graduates of local school districts
- Providing space for high school students to conduct training on how to use cell phones
- Offering more computer training classes
- Hosting programs and other events at local schools

- Collaborating on "one book, one community" concept

- Partnering with local high schools to promote new urban fiction collection

- Host acoustic musicians on weeknights and weekends

- Starting a gaming club for teenagers either after school hours or on Saturday afternoons

- Screening movies for young children and high school students

- Offering readers advisory service with greater publicity

- Hosting space for English as a Second Language classes

- Providing more programming for infants and toddlers

- Initiating a teen book discussion or poetry group

- Holding computer classes on how to use genealogy databases

- Hosting the mystery supper event again

- Holding trivia competitions

School officials in particular felt it is increasingly important to encourage avid reading at a young age, noting it is "very vital [to] our community."

Several focus group participants suggested that the physical appearance of the library detracts from residents coming into the building. One participant said, "The appearance doesn't welcome patrons," and another wanted the library to "make better use of the space." Focus group participants made the following suggestions to improve the library's physical space:
- Brighter lighting on the exterior of the building and in the entryway of the library
- New carpeting
- More comfortable seating
- Aesthetic upgrades
- Reconfigured furniture to allow more people space to plug in electronic devices, such as laptops, tablets, or cell phones
- Add more colorful décor to the children's area
- Remove gate in front entryway to create more inviting atmosphere
- Push out exterior wall nearest the parking lot
- Create entrance to library off of parking lot
- Reconfigured space to create study rooms and/or an area for small groups to work, as well as a craft area

- Make furniture and desks as mobile as possible to allow for rearrangements
- Create a dedicated computer lab
- Install room dividers in the basement area to maximize use of collaborative space

One focus group participant noted, "The space needs to evolve to keep the patrons evolving," and another said the library should "keep up with whatever the needs [of the community] are." While focus group participants thought the overall size of the library is appropriate for the population it serves, they thought some upgrades would make the facility feel more modern. Others suggested the space throughout the library is not always utilized in the most efficient manner. For example, some patrons who frequently visit the library and participated in the focus groups said they had never been in the library's basement.

All focus groups were asked whether they knew family members, friends, neighbors, or other acquaintances who did not use the library. Participants cited many reasons for non-use, ranging from straightforward to more complex, including the following:
- Patrons stop coming to the library when they accrue a fine
- While two staff members speak Spanish, Spanish-speaking residents may not come to the library due to a perceived language barrier
- Work schedules and/or other family responsibilities may conflict with library availability
- Location of the library is difficult to find, with limited signage and a front entryway perceived to be "uninviting and run-down"
- Some residents may prefer to buy books and other materials
- Students may use online search engines, such as Google, instead of using the library as a traditional source of research materials
- Some residents may perceive the library to merely be a place for books
- Some residents may feel uncomfortable providing personal information to obtain a library card
- Some residents may not be literate or prefer not to read
- Residents may not realize all that the library has to offer

There were mixed feelings about the use of e-readers in the community and whether the library should offer more or fewer e-book titles. School officials and some parents mentioned that students use tablets and e-readers in schools now, and the trend for the foreseeable future includes shifting use of print materials in schools to more portable and accessible electronic

versions. One patron felt that the "library serves as a place to learn technology." However, other focus group participants suggested that "e-books and audiobooks have reached their peak." Patrons who reported using e-books for their own media consumption primarily said they use them as a supplement to printed materials, rather than an absolute replacement.

In the future, patrons and community leaders alike see the library as a community center and would like to see the library create a more social atmosphere that is conducive to being a gathering place. While patrons said they primarily visit the library to check out and return materials, they said they would like to see the library as more of a community gathering place in the future, through hosting community events, forging stronger community partnerships, and developing a more inviting, updated aesthetic. One participant said, "If the library improves, the quality of life of the village improves."

Trends and Implications

Strengths of the Library

Location and Size of Library

It is clear that residents value traditional library services, and focus group participants were vocal in their praise of the library's location and size. When asked in the mail survey to rank how valued certain aspects of the library were to residents, survey respondents listed the library's location as the second highest valued aspect of the library. Patrons and community leaders alike stated in the focus groups that they valued the central location of the library, in what several participants termed Hillside's "city center atmosphere."

Library Atmosphere and Staff

Focus group participants also felt that the staff fostered a "comfortable" and "safe" environment in the library, which patrons said is one of the library's strongest assets. It is also clear that board members, patrons, and community leaders view the staff as one of the library's strongest assets. Patrons said that staff are "welcoming when [they] see you," and felt that the size of the library lends itself to a friendly, customer service-oriented environment. One patron said there is "no question too small" for the staff, and others considered them to be "very friendly, very helpful."

Type and Availability of Materials

There were also few complaints about the library's collection. Patrons appreciated the availability of popular titles, as well as DVDs and audiobooks. Hillside residents continue to value traditional library materials and services, though some may be moving towards electronic consumption of materials in the near future, and several comments expressed desire for more new titles in the collection.

Areas for Improvement

The community input collected from surveys and focus groups indicated several areas of improvement for the library.

Marketing

One area for improvement, evident from both the community email survey and focus groups, is public relations and marketing. Focus group participants mentioned the library's traditional methods of advertising programs and services included in-library postings, a mailed quarterly newsletter, and some community flyers. Information posted in the library in print and via the video screen is valuable to patrons already using the library but fails to reach any residents not already visiting the library. Similarly, some focus group participants said they could not recall receiving the library newsletter, which suggests non-users may not be receiving or reading it. Even library users who frequently visit the library said they are not always aware of programs the library is hosting. One patron said, "There's probably more going on here than I know about." Similarly, one community leader did not know patrons could download e-books onto their tablets at the library. One survey respondent said, "I forget it's there" in reference to the library. Development of community partnerships and greater outreach efforts may provide the library with an opportunity to reach more residents to inform them about what the library has to offer.

Email Communications

It also may be beneficial for the library to begin to regularly communicate with patrons via email, including developing a robust email distribution list and disseminating occasional e-newsletters. Patrons participating in the focus groups said they welcomed more email communication from the library, and in some cases, would be more likely to read an e-newsletter than the printed quarterly newsletter that is mailed to their homes. As digital communications, such as social media, use of e-readers, and web-based information sources, continue to become widely utilized, it will be advantageous to the library to establish methods of communication with patrons already accustomed to these media.

Building Updates

Several focus group participants suggested the physical appearance of the library might deter new patrons: "People might perceive the library to be uninviting and run-down." In addition, participants felt that some residents do not see the value in the library. Updates to both the

building interior and exterior may create a more inviting atmosphere that will encourage increased patron use of the facility. Such updates may include carpeting, paint, and brighter interior and exterior lighting. Participants in both the focus groups and the mail survey commented on uncomfortable seating in the library. One comment said, "When I come to a class, the metal chairs are [a] discomfort," and other respondents cited uncomfortable chairs are barriers or difficulties they have encountered while using the library. Similarly, more visible signage throughout the village may serve a dual purpose: a visual reminder to residents of the library's presence as well as clarity as to its location.

Community Partnerships

Many focus group participants suggested the opportunities for the library to partner with other community organizations to offer space for groups to host community events, develop a community literacy campaign, and present new programming for children and teenagers. Some patrons mentioned the library had hosted a community-wide holiday event in previous years and encouraged the library to embrace its role as a community center and host similar events in the future. They felt that these events not only encourage collaboration between community organizations, but also introduce the library space to community members who might not otherwise visit the building.

Library's Role in Community Literacy

Focus group participants occasionally mentioned a perceived low literacy rate in the community and felt that the inability to read could lead to a dislike of reading, which could consequently deter residents from using the library at all. According to the 2013 Illinois State Report Card, Grade 11 students at Proviso West High School, which serves Hillside high school students, scored worse than the state average on the reading portion of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). Only 27.1% of Grade 11 students at Proviso West High School met or exceeded standards on the reading portion. 56.1% of students scored below standards, and 16.8% of students scored at the performance level considered to be "Academic Warning." Among students with limited English proficiency, scores were lower: 15.8% of students met standards, 52.6% scored below standards, and 31.6% scored at the "Academic Warning" performance level.

Conclusion

Overall, respondents were pleased with the quality and availability of materials the library has to offer, as well as the customer service and friendly atmosphere provided by the library and its staff. The community surveys and focus groups yielded positive feedback for the library regarding the library's collection offered to the Hillside community. In addition to collecting valuable responses, the surveys and focus groups increased community engagement and educated both residents who use and those who do not use the library on what it has to offer.

Looking ahead, community leaders and patrons alike envision the library as playing a larger role as a physical and informational community center. Steps to reach this vision could include interior and exterior building updates, further adaptation to new technologies, and increased pursuit of worthwhile community partnerships.