



Date: April 24, 2012

To: Steve Albers and members of the Board of Trustees

From: Mary Getchell, Marketing & Community Relations Director

Subject: Public Opinion Weighted Data and Focus Groups Reports

Attached are copies of reports from Pierce County Library System's recent public opinion polling and focus groups. One report examines results from the public opinion polls using weighted data or data comparing respondents in the survey with adults living in the Library System's service area, per the 2010 U.S. Census. The other report describes the results from three focus groups: two with adults and one with teenagers. As we have discussed the Library System contracted with GMA Research Corporation to conduct public opinion research to gather the public's ideas and opinions about services individuals need and value to help define the Library's product.

GMA Research compared the weighted data (Census representation of the Library's service area) with unweighted data (original survey sample of responses), using both gender and age demographics, to normalize the original respondents' data to match Census statistics of adults in the Library's service area. GMA Research concluded the respondents to the survey represented a nearly identical or very close match with adults in the Library's service area, and that the statistical differences are insignificant, i.e. the respondents in the survey—in terms of age and gender—provide a good representation of the adults in the Library's service area.

In relationship to the solid quantitative information in the survey, the focus groups provided excellent qualitative information. From the findings in the survey, the focus group participants further defined and refined their opinions about the priority products/services of the Library System. Overall the participants spoke strongly toward the Library's product to be defined as reading; learning, in particular early learning; helping students succeed in school; and helping/customer service. This opinion appeared both in the adults' and teenagers' focus groups. On the whole focus group participants did not point to an online library as being a top priority, and the adult participants did not believe it needed significant funding or resources. However, in the quantitative research, survey respondents ranked an online library as a top priority. GMA Research recruited the participants from the public opinion poll participants. The demographic makeup, gender, age, and ethnicity were diverse and representative of the Library's service area. The participants who attended the adult focus groups tended to be strong library customers, whereas the representation in the teen group was a good mix of power, moderate, and non-current customers.

During the June Board meeting we would like the Board of Trustees to further discuss the survey and focus group results and share their opinions and ideas about the findings. Our Administrative Team plans to work with the Trustees to use the results of the survey and focus groups to help inform the Library's service and operational decisions regarding services to continue, add, reduce, or discontinue.