

## INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the responses and findings to a national survey of public library involvement in adult cultural programs. The Public Programs Office of the American Library Association (ALA) conducted the study with funding from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (LWRD). Deborah Robertson, ALA, was the project manager and contracted with Debra Wilcox Johnson for work on the design and analysis of the questionnaire. Sheila Murphy, LWRD, administered the project and, along with Tom Brock from the Fund, participated in questionnaire design. Ed Lakner at the Library Research Center (LRC) at the University of Illinois drew the study sample and performed data collection and computer work for the study.

The sample included all public libraries serving 100,000 or more (461) and a sample of 1,039 from libraries serving 5,000 or more and less than 100,000. This was the same sample used for a concurrent survey being done on programming for school-aged youth by ALA and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. To be eligible for the sample, a library had to meet the following criteria: serve 5,000 or more, at least one MLS librarian, at least two paid full-time staff, open at least 40 hours per week, and operating expenditures of at least \$100,000 per year. The total sample was 1,500 libraries.

Two rounds of pretests were conducted with libraries representing the different size libraries. Two mailings of the questionnaire were carried out by the LRC. The mailings and data entry occurred from January to July 1998. There were 1,229 useable responses for a response rate of 81.9% (1,500 total mailed). Half of the questionnaires were completed by library directors.

This report is presented in three sections: a summary of frequencies for each of the survey questions, analysis of results, and comparison of findings to other studies. Details of the sample selection are in Appendix A.

## SECTION I: FREQUENCIES

This section reports the number of "yes" responses to each of the questions. For open-ended questions, the answers are summarized. The results are presented in the order they appeared on the questionnaire.

### **BOOK DISCUSSION PROGRAMS** (Question 1a. - j.)

Over half of the libraries (61.4%, n=1225) offer book discussion programs. Of these libraries, 68.2 percent (n=727) offer these programs in one outlet; 12.4 percent offer programs in two outlets. Programs are offered in three or more outlets by 19.4 percent of the libraries.

Book discussions are offered monthly by over half of the libraries (54.7%, n=742). The percentage of libraries offering each type of schedule are listed below.

Once a week	2.7%
2 to 3 times a month	12.4%
Once a month	54.7%
2 to 11 times a year	16.7%
Once a year series	7.4%
Once a year event	1.2%
Can't generalize	3.8%
Other	1.1%

Attendance at book discussion programs was less than 20 for over three-quarters of the libraries (79.2%, n=741). This is in keeping with the recommended size for book discussion groups by ALA and other programming experts.

1 to 9	30.9%
10 to 19	48.3%
20 to 29	14.6%
30 or more	6.2%

The demand for book discussion groups has held steady or grown in most of the libraries (96.6%, n=736). The percentages of libraries reporting demand for programming in each of the three categories are listed below.

Grown	46.3%
Stayed the same	50.3%
Decreased	3.4%

Nearly three-quarters of the libraries plan to offer a similar number of book discussion programs next year (72.0%, n=738). Interest in increasing book discussions was reported by 23.6 percent of the libraries. Less than five percent of the sample plan a reduction (fewer, 2.7%, and none, 1.8%).

One in three libraries target specific client groups for book discussion programs (34.5%, n=740). The majority (65.5%) did not report targeting groups for these programs. For those who target specific groups (n=255), the following groups were identified:

Gender	27.8%
Age	50.2%
Ethnicity/race	32.2%
Interest groups	67.5%
Other	11.0%

Libraries reported more than one target group in some cases. Among the "other" responses, seven libraries reported "genre readers" as a targeted group. Additional libraries could have a similar focus, but may have reported this as "interest groups" on the questionnaire.

When asked about book discussions linked to the Oprah Winfrey Book Club, 13.0 percent (n=254) said this occurred. A larger number (19.7%, n=244) said they planned to do this in the next twelve months. Unfortunately, a low percentage of libraries answered this question because of an error in instructions on 1.g. to skip to Question 2. Nearly 500 libraries mistakenly skipped this question.

**CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS** (Question 2a. - h.)

About one in five libraries (18.2%, n=1212) offer creative writing workshops. Of these libraries, 82.0 percent (n=205) offer these programs in one outlet; 9.8 percent offer programs in two outlets. Programs are offered in three or more outlets by 8.3 percent of the libraries.

Creative writing workshops are offered on a diverse schedule among the libraries (n=216), with no one schedule being offered by the majority of libraries. The percentage of libraries offering each of the schedule types are listed below.

Once a week	10.6%
2 to 3 times a month	10.6%
Once a month	9.7%
2 to 11 times a year	17.1%
Once a year series	16.2%
Once a year event	22.7%
Can't generalize	10.6%
Other	2.3%

Attendance at creative writing workshops was 20 or less for 67.0 percent (n=215). This attendance level may reflect the desire for individualized attention during the writing workshops.

1 to 9	25.6%
10 to 19	41.4%
20 to 29	19.5%
30 or more	13.5%

The demand for creative writing workshops has held steady in over half of the libraries (64.0%, n=211). The percentages of libraries reporting demand in each category are listed below.

Grown	27.5%
Stayed the same	64.0%
Decreased	8.5%

Three-quarters of the libraries plan to offer a similar number of creative writing workshops

next year (75.2%, n=210). About one in ten libraries will offer a greater number of these events.

A greater number	12.4%
About the same	75.2%
Fewer	4.3%
None	8.1%

Over one-third of the libraries target specific client groups for creative writing workshops (39.4%, n=213). The majority (60.6%) did not report targeting groups for these programs. For those who target specific groups (n=84), the following groups were identified:

Gender	14.3%
Age	52.4%
Ethnicity/race	17.9%
Interest groups	63.1%
Other	14.3%

Libraries reported more than one target group in some cases. Among the “other” responses, three libraries reported “poetry writers” as a targeted group. Additional libraries could have a similar focus, but may have reported this as “interest groups” on the questionnaire.

#### **AUTHOR PRESENTATIONS/READINGS (Question 3a. - h.)**

Over half of the libraries (59.3%, n=1217) offer author presentations/readings. Of these libraries, 70.7 percent (n=703) offer these programs in one outlet; 11.2 percent offer programs in two outlets. Programs are offered in three or more outlets by 18.1 percent of the libraries.

Author presentations/readings are offered 2 to 11 times per year by over 40 percent of the libraries (n=715). The next most common schedule was once per year (23.5%). The percentage of libraries offering each schedule type are listed below.

Once a week	0.1%
2 to 3 times a month	1.7%
Once a month	5.5%
2 to 11 times a year	41.0%
Once a year series	6.2%
Once a year event	23.5%
Can't generalize	19.9%
Other	2.2%

Attendance at author presentations/readings was 50 or less for nearly three-quarters of the libraries (72.9%, n=719). Compared to the book discussions and creative writing workshops,

libraries were more likely to draw larger crowds for author events.

1 to 25	36.7%
26 to 50	36.2%
51 to 75	13.9%
76 to 100	7.5%
Over 100	5.7%

The demand for author presentations/readings has held steady or grown in most of the libraries (95.4%, n=711). The percentages of libraries in each demand category are listed below.

Grown	23.2%
Stayed the same	72.2%
Decreased	4.6%

Most of the libraries plan to offer a greater number or similar number of author presentations/readings next year (90.4%, n=711). An increase was reported by nearly one in four libraries.

A greater number	22.8%
About the same	67.7%
Fewer	4.6%
None	4.9%

Nearly one in three libraries target specific client groups for author presentations/readings (31.3, n=715). The majority (68.7%) did not report targeting groups for these programs. For those who target specific groups (n=224), the following groups were identified:

Gender	24.6%
Age	46.9%
Ethnicity/race	38.4%
Interest groups	82.1%
Other	9.4%

Libraries reported more than one target group in some cases. Among the “other” responses, three libraries reported “donors” as a targeted group. This may refer to annual Friends of the Library events that are seen in public libraries. No other patterns were found in the “other” responses.

#### **ADULT READING INCENTIVE PROGRAMS (Question 4a. - h.)**

One in five libraries (20.1%, n=1211) offer adult reading incentive programs. Of these libraries, 64.4 percent (n=225) offer these programs in one outlet; 12.9 percent offer programs in two outlets. Programs are offered in three or more outlets by 22.7 percent of the libraries.

Adult reading incentive programs are offered as a once a year series by one in three libraries (34.9%, n=232). Because reading incentive programs are an individual activity, rather than a scheduled group activity, the distinction between these as a once a year series or once a year event may not be meaningful. When combining the figures from these two categories and the relevant “other” responses, it shows that three out of four libraries offer reading incentive programs as an annual event (75.0%).

Once a week	1.7%
2 to 3 times a week	2.2%
Once a month	2.2%
2 to 11 times a year	13.4%
Once a year series	34.9%
Once a year event	32.8%
Can't generalize	3.4%
Other	9.5%

The most frequent response in the “other” category was “summer” (15 libraries); two libraries reported winter. As noted above, these responses can be combined with the once a year categories. Four libraries noted that the reading incentive program was an ongoing activity.

Participation in adult reading incentive programs was over 100 for one in three libraries (35.5%, n=234). The larger participation numbers may be an indication of the individual participation and no scheduled time for “attending” an actual event.

1 to 25	21.4%
26 to 50	20.5%
51 to 75	12.0%
76 to 100	10.7%
Over 100	35.5%

The demand for adult reading incentive programs has held steady or grown in most of the libraries (94.8%, n=230). The percentages of libraries in each category are reported below.

Grown	38.7%
Stayed the same	56.1%
Decreased	5.2%

Four out of five of the libraries plan to offer a similar number of adult reading incentive programs next year (84.6%, n=234). Nearly one in ten libraries would like to offer more reading

incentive activities.

A greater number	9.4%
About the same	84.6%
Fewer	1.3%
None	4.7%

Only one out of five libraries target specific client groups for adult reading incentive programs (19.8%, n=237). The majority (80.2%) did not report targeting groups for these programs. For those who target specific groups (n=47), the following groups were identified:

Gender	10.6%
Age	63.8%
Ethnicity/race	10.6%
Interest groups	48.9%
Other	10.6%

Libraries reported more than one target group in some cases. The actual number of other responses was too small to determine any patterns.

## **DISCUSSION ACROSS THE FOUR PROGRAM TYPES**

Among these four literary program types, book discussions and author presentations/readings are offered the most frequently by libraries. A similar pattern emerges when examining the “typical” schedule for these two events. Book discussions were most likely to be offered once a month (54.7%, n=742) and author events 2 to 11 times per year (41.0%, n=715). Creative writing workshops were the least likely to be offered with no clear pattern for scheduling. While reading incentive programs were most likely to be an annual event (75.0%, n=232), this type of activity is typically carried out over a several week period.

In some libraries, the programs were offered in more than one outlet. The majority of the libraries offer each of the programs in only one outlet, but this primarily reflects the large number of libraries in the study that do not have branch libraries. Reading incentive programs are the most frequently offered in three or more outlets. This may be partially explained by the fact that no meeting rooms or space are needed for this type of activity, allowing it to be offered in bookmobiles and smaller branches.

Attendance figures seem to reflect the nature of the four types of programming. The “intensity of participation” may be a factor in the program types with the smallest groups. Intensity of participation means that more individual effort is required either in preparation for the program or while attending the event. For both book discussions and creative writing workshops, a greater level of participation is anticipated than for attending author presentations/readings. It is harder to compare the attendance results for reading incentive programs. The “intensity of

participation” is very high, since this is an individual activity linked to the amount and/or kinds of reading being done by the adult. In this case, the higher attendance figures may be because no scheduled group times are required for participation.

The survey provides ample evidence that the demand for literary programming is constant and, in at least one in four libraries, the demand has increased for each of the program types. Nearly half of the libraries reported an increased demand for book discussion programs. In response to this demand, the vast majority of libraries predicted a stable or increased level of activity in all four program types. The highest growth rates will be in book discussions and author events.

Most libraries did not report targeting specific groups when developing literary programming, with reading incentive programs being the least likely to be designed for a specific audience. Yet, in the themes and exhibits questions (27 and 28), multicultural groups were central to the list of proposed ideas. With the exception of reading incentive programs, interest groups were the most frequently targeted, followed by age groups. Book discussions and author programs were the most likely to be designed for an ethnic/multicultural audience. One surprising result was the few libraries that mentioned “non-library users” as a target group. The literature and practice in the field suggest that this is one of the reasons libraries offer adult programming. This was not, however, specifically listed as a choice, which could account for libraries not thinking to specify it as an “other” category.

## **OTHER CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (Questions 5 - 7)**

In addition to the four literary program types, the questionnaire addressed other cultural activities in the library. These included local and traveling exhibits and other types of cultural programming.

Nearly three out of four libraries reported hosting locally-developed cultural exhibits (70.5%, n=1077). Half of the libraries reported hosting three or less locally-developed cultural exhibits (50.4%). Three-quarters of the libraries reported hosting ten or less locally-developed cultural exhibits (75.1%). Sixty libraries (5.6%) reported 25 or more locally-developed cultural exhibits during the last year.

The majority of libraries did not host a traveling cultural exhibit during the last year (61.8%, n=757). This may be a factor of both the availability of traveling exhibits and the space requirements for housing the exhibit. One traveling exhibit was sponsored by 16.9 percent of the libraries, and two exhibits were hosted by 10.6 percent of the libraries.

Libraries did link the cultural exhibits to library programming. Over half of the libraries (56.2%, n=851) reported offering programs in relation to their cultural exhibits (local/traveling).

In addition to the four literary programs discussed earlier, libraries offered other types of cultural programs. The percent of libraries offering each type are listed below (n=1229).

Lecture series	43.8%
Musical performances	41.7%
Dance performances	14.2%
Dramatic performances	22.9%
Film series	19.8%
Other	15.3%

The “other” category showed that art events were held by 16.0 percent of the libraries reporting in the “other category, as were programs of a historical nature (including local history). Poetry was specifically mentioned by 12.2% of these libraries, although this was considered as literary programming and covered by the first set of questions. Other types of programs identified by at least five of the libraries were: arts and crafts, adult storytelling, travel/travelogues, book reviews, study groups (music, language), and genealogy. In addition, 26.5% reported offering reader’s advisory services.

Reader’s advisory services tend to be more ongoing rather than in the form of programs, although a library may define reader’s advisory as encompassing literary programming. The lack of clear definition for reader’s advisory within the field and on the questionnaire suggests caution in drawing any conclusions about reader’s advisory from this study.

When these programming activities are compared to the four literary program types, a fuller picture of library cultural programming emerges. Following book discussions and author events, lecture series, musical performances, and dramatic performances are the most frequently offered programs. Libraries are offering a full range of cultural activities.

### **PROGRAM ATTENDANCE** (Questions 8 - 10)

For libraries offering adult programming, 94.5 percent offered some type of cultural programming. Of all the *adult programs* offered by the libraries in the last year, 18.5 percent of respondents (n=944) reported that 100 percent were cultural programs and 8.3 percent of respondents reported 90 percent were cultural. One hundred libraries (10.6%) reported that 50 percent were cultural programs. Only 5.5 percent said that none of the programs were cultural.

The total attendance for all *programs for adults* offered during the last fiscal year or the past 12 months ranged widely, with the highest attendance total reported to be over 10,000 (7.0%, n=905). Nearly half the libraries reported total attendance of 500 or less (48.4%). A telephone query of a few libraries offering reading incentive programs showed that participation in this activity was not likely to be reported in program attendance figures.

When asked about what percentage of this total attendance was the result of *cultural programs* for adults, the number reporting 100 percent was 18.5 percent of the libraries (n=877).

Fifty percent or less was cultural programming attendance in 43.7 percent of the libraries.

**FUNDING** (Questions 11 - 13)

One out of four libraries have a separate line item in the budget for adult programming (24.1%, n=1064). The adult programming budget is combined with children’s programming in 15.8 percent of the libraries. No separate line item for programming was reported by 60.2 percent of the libraries. For those with a separate line item (n=254), 55.5 percent reported the budget had stayed the same, while 36.6 percent reported an increase. A decrease was reported by 7.9 percent of the libraries.

The library Friends group was the most frequent source of outside funding for adult programming (67.7%, n=1147). Only 7.7 percent of the libraries depended solely on library operating funds for adult programming activities. Nearly half of the libraries used one or two funding sources outside the library’s budget. Besides Friends, other funders include:

Humanities council	31.3%
Local/state arts councils	26.9%
Local service/civic groups	19.7%
Individual donors	15.0%
Other	13.7%
Corporations/businesses	13.3%
Library foundation	10.4%
Community or local foundations	8.9%
LSTA/LSCA grants	5.9%
Other state government sources	5.1%
National foundations	4.9%
Other federal government sources	2.1%

**COLLABORATION** (Questions 14 - 19)

The library Friends group is a key collaborator for adult programming. Three out of four libraries collaborate with the Friends of the Library (74.1%, n=1046). Funding is the most common contribution from the Friends groups to adult programming (90.6%, n=775). Other important contributions include refreshments, audience, volunteers, and publicity. Nearly one out of two libraries work with Friends groups when planning cultural programs. Contributions the Friends of the Library make to the library’s cultural programming are listed below.

Provide funds	90.6%
Refreshments for programs	76.3%
<i>Contributions from Friends, cont.</i>	

Audience/program attendees	68.6%
Volunteers for program tasks	62.1%
Publicity	50.5%
Planning/advice	47.6%
Program presenters	24.5%
Printing services	11.4%
Equipment for the program	8.6%
Other	2.8%
Facilities/space for the program	2.3%

Most libraries collaborate with at least one outside group when offering cultural programming (86.1%, n=1147). The five most frequently reported collaborators were: arts groups (40.3%), historical societies (32.7%), community-based organizations (32.1%), newspapers (30.0%), and writers groups (23.9%). Other collaborators include:

Local business	23.0%
Bookstores	22.7%
Museums	22.7%
Service clubs	20.9%
Primary/secondary schools	20.1%
Other libraries	19.1%
Four-year colleges/universities	18.8%
Literacy programs	18.1%
Radio stations	17.0%
Drama groups	14.9%
Television stations	14.2%
Two-year/community colleges	11.6%

When asked which groups make the greatest contribution to the library's cultural programming, the top five included: arts groups (38.9%, n=808), community-based organizations (28.6%), newspapers (23.5%), historical societies (23.1%), and writers groups (15.2%). The principal contributions made by these groups include program presenters, publicity, and audience. Below is the list of contributions made by collaborators (n=988).

Program presenters	56.8%
Publicity	54.3%
Audience/program attendees	44.8%
Planning/advice	35.2%
Provide funds	31.9%
Volunteers for program tasks	21.4%
Refreshments for programs	18.0%
<i>Principal contributions, cont.</i>	

Facilities/space for the program	7.1%
Equipment for the program	6.8%
Printing services	6.4%
Other	3.7%

In the other category, exhibits and displays were mentioned by 13 libraries, selling books for the library at author events by 11 libraries, and donating prizes and incentives by 8 libraries.

The library is the chief initiator of collaborative efforts. When asked “Who typically initiates the collaborative effort in cultural programming?” the following responses were given (n=968):

Always the library	22.3%
Mostly the library	49.4%
The library and other organizations about equally	23.7%
Mostly other organizations	4.1%
Always other organizations	0.5%

#### **CULTURAL ROLE OF THE LIBRARY** (Questions 20 - 23)

The respondents were split on the issue of centrality of adult cultural programming to the library’s mission, with 47.1 percent saying it was central (n=1192) and 45.3 percent saying no. The response “don’t know” was chosen by 7.6 percent of the libraries.

Respondents tended to rate the level of commitment to library cultural programming in the middle ranges. The respondent to the questionnaire (“yourself”) was the most likely to report “absolute commitment.” One in three respondents perceived strong commitment by both library management and self. The following table summarizes the responses (n’s ranges from 1159 to 1197).

	No Commitment	Limited Commitment	Modest Commitment	Strong Commitment	Absolute Commitment
Library staff	7.5%	26.8%	36.5%	25.3%	3.9%
Library management	4.2%	18.4%	29.9%	33.8%	13.7%
Library board	8.8%	24.8%	33.8%	25.5%	7.2%
Community	7.6%	31.1%	35.1%	22.2%	4.1%
Yourself (respondent)	3.6%	15.1%	26.1%	33.4%	21.8%

An average was calculated for each of the groups. The perceived level of commitment to cultural programming was highest among respondents themselves, with an average rating

of 3.6 on the five-point scale, followed by library management at 3.4 and library board at 3.0. The lowest perceived levels of commitment were found for the library staff (2.9) and community (2.8).

One out of three libraries (34.5%, n=1213) perceived no or limited availability of *literary programming* (other than the library) in their communities. When compared to perceptions of availability of other cultural programs, literary programming was seen as having lower availability.

Not available	7.5%
Very limited availability	27.0%
Somewhat available	24.6%
Moderately available	21.2%
Highly available	19.7%

In comparison, only one out of five libraries (21.3%, n=1212) perceived no or limited availability of *other cultural programming* activity in their service areas.

Not available	4.0%
Very limited availability	17.3%
Somewhat available	19.6%
Moderately available	25.4%
Highly available	33.7%

#### **LOCAL PROGRAMMING NEEDS (Question 24)**

Respondents found all of the suggested items as potentially helpful in increasing library cultural programming efforts. Pre-packaged programs, traveling exhibits, information on funding opportunities, and ALA-sponsored grant opportunities were chosen by one out of two libraries (n=1229).

Pre-packaged programs available to the library	59.3%
Traveling exhibits available to the library	56.4%
Program speaker referral system/recommendations	55.1%
Information on funding sources and opportunities	53.1%
ALA-sponsored grant opportunities	50.3%
Newsletter on programming and exhibits	36.5%
Assistance in determining community need/interest in cultural programming	35.7%
Manual/materials on developing cultural programming	34.6%
Training in developing cultural programming	32.8%
[Discussion list] for people interested in programming and exhibits	27.9%
<i>Increase efforts, cont.</i>	

Source(s) for professionally-produced publicity materials	25.1%
Other	21.8%
Consulting/technical assistance on developing cultural programming	20.5%
Mentoring opportunities with other programmers	20.1%
Assistance in evaluating/assessing impact of cultural programming	19.6%

The “other” category revealed expected results, with staff and/or time leading the list. In the other category, 12.2 percent of the libraries indicated lack of staffing and/or time as a barrier to programming. Funding was mentioned by 7.3 percent and space for programming by 5.3 percent. The perception of needing space for programming was echoed in the open-ended questions, especially when asked about traveling exhibit ideas.

### **ALA SERVICES (Questions 25 - 26)**

There was widest awareness of the Let’s Talk About It (57.2%, n=1182), followed by Writers Live at the Library (50.6%, n=1175) and Poets in Person (45.7%, n=1178). About one in four of the libraries were aware of the other ALA initiatives. There was awareness of Exploring the West by 28.6 percent of the libraries (n=1164), The Nation That Works by 27.0 percent (n=1158), and StoryLines, the newest initiative, by 22.5 percent (n=1158).

Among the traveling exhibits, the respondents were most familiar with The Many Realms of King Arthur (30.2%, n=1180). About one in four libraries were familiar with Beyond Category ... Duke Ellington (25.4%, n=1179), The Frontier in American Culture (24.3%, n=1177), and A More Perfect Union ... Japanese Americans (24.1%, n=1175). The exhibit It’s US was known by 18.9 percent of the libraries (n=1180).

### **PROGRAM IDEAS (Question 27)**

Respondents were asked if there were any cultural programs or themes they would like to see ALA develop for local library use (Question 27). The open-ended question yielded a wide variety of suggestions from 21.2% (260) of the libraries, with some respondents offering more than one program idea.. While several unique recommendations were given, the majority of the answers could be grouped into five categories: literature, history, the arts, multicultural, and libraries. General program suggestions included film series (13).

In the *literature* category, a total of 110 suggestions were given. There was general support for book discussions and author visits. Among the types of literature noted by more than one person were poetry and genre fiction. Respondents also noted women writers, regional writers, and contemporary authors. Some suggestions were made for writing workshops. The multicultural category (see below) also encompasses literature of interest to the targeted groups for programming. The ideas given by at least five libraries in this category are summarized below. When individual suggestions were given in a subcategory, they are listed in that group.

<i>Program idea</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Genre fiction	13
Regional writers	13
Poetry	8
Writing	7
Popular literature	7
Women writers	6
Contemporary authors	6

The *history* category focused primarily on U.S. history, with some interest in tying into local history. A total of 97 suggestions were given in this category. Rural life was a subcategory that emerged. Nine (9) people mentioned genealogy. A summary of history program themes shows the diversity of responses in this category. Only those items mentioned at least five times are listed.

<i>Program idea</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
American/U.S. history	35
Civil War and earlier (10)	
Post Civil War period (14)	
Immigration experience (7)	
Genealogy	9
Local/state history	8
Women's history	8
Rural life/farming	7
Biography	5
History of transportation	5

The *arts* category covers visual and performing arts. A total of 54 suggestions were given in this category. Exhibits of artwork as well as presentations by and about artists were requested (17). Four (4) libraries mentioned the art and history of the book, and two (2) mentioned illustrations from children's books. The music subcategory (20) included general music appreciation programs as well as types of music. The types of music listed were rock and roll, Motown, gospel, big band (1940s), jazz, opera, and Sousa compositions. Five (5) libraries mentioned drama.

A strong theme that emerged in this question was the desire for programming with a *multicultural* focus, often with specific groups of people mentioned. A total of 152 suggestions

were in this group. This category tends to cross over the first three categories of responses, as references to racial and ethnic groups tended to be broadly stated and encompassing literature, history, and the arts. For that reason, these results need to be considered in addition to the specific program types identified above. Over ten percent of the respondents to this question noted the need for multicultural, diverse, and ethnic programming in general (28, 10.8%). In addition, five or more respondents listed five (5) groups; these are summarized below.

<i>Group</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
African American	30
Hispanic/Latino	26
Native American	21
Asian	14
Irish	5

A final theme that emerged from the data was related to *libraries*. Seventeen (17) suggestions were given for programs in this category. Library history was the most frequently mentioned (8), with five of those focusing on public library history. Seven (7) respondents cited the role of the public library in American life and as a cultural center. Two (2) people mentioned intellectual freedom.

There were a few program suggestions that did not fit easily into these five categories, but were mentioned by at least five (5) people. American culture was listed five (5) times. One theme that emerged was related to the new millennium (11). This was expressed as celebrating the century, future oriented, and the new millennium. The effect of technology was of interest, with six (6) program ideas suggested. Among these were: “the digital citizen: community and the Internet,” “the information challenge from books to cyberspace,” and “the effect of technology on culture.”

There were a total of 27 program topics that did not fit the study’s definition of cultural programming. These might best be described as “informational programming,” e.g., exercise, gardening, new age philosophy. Other than sports and computers, all of these were mentioned only once. This data are not reported here, but were included in the total count of useable responses to this question.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR EXHIBITS**

The final survey question asked for suggestions for traveling exhibits. A total of 265 libraries (21.6%) provided useable responses. Some libraries offered more than one suggestion. The five primary categories from Question 27 on programming also emerged in this question: literature, history, arts, multicultural, and libraries. The predominant theme here was history.

In the *literature* category, a total of 69 suggestions were given. Exhibits on authors were the most frequently suggested (22), using themes such as authors from a certain period, women

writers, or literary prize winners. In addition, five (5) libraries noted the need for exhibits on state and regional authors. Genre fiction was mentioned by 11 libraries and American literature by 9 respondents.

The *history* category had a total of 167 suggestions. U.S. history clearly predominated, with 66 ideas. The history of transportation category encompassed a variety, such as railroads and automobiles. The list of primary themes are listed below; each had at least five responses.

<i>Exhibit idea</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
U.S. history	66
Post Civil War period (19)	
Civil War (16)	
The West/Frontier (14)	
Immigration (6)	
Slavery (6)	
History of travel/transportation	16
History (general)	14
Historical photographs (5)	
Women's history	10
Local/state history	9
Rural/farming	8
Genealogy	7
Biography	6

The *arts* category focused chiefly on visual arts and music. A total of 65 themes were suggested. Art and artists were mentioned by 23 people. Children's book illustrators were seen as good exhibits by eight (8) respondents, and the history and art of books and printing by seven (7). Thirteen (13) libraries suggested musical themes; five (5) of these were related to jazz.

As was the case with program suggestions, ideas for exhibits encompassed the *multicultural* theme. A total of 82 suggestions were made in this category. Multiculturalism in general was listed by 15 libraries. Four groups were specifically mentioned by five (5) or more libraries: Native American (18), African American (16), Hispanic/Latino (11), and Asian (10).

Three main themes emerged in the *libraries* category: history of U.S. libraries (14), intellectual freedom (7), and role of the library in the community (5). Library architecture was mentioned four (4) times.

Some of the exhibit ideas did not fit into these groupings. The five that were suggested most frequently were American culture (6), travel (6), and cultures of the world (5).

In addition to the libraries that gave suggestions for exhibits, another 46 libraries commented on the lack of adequate space to use traveling exhibits. The comments about the lack

of space were not surprising, given the varying size of libraries that participated in the survey. In addition, the open-ended responses to Question 24 about local library needs showed that lack of space for programming and exhibits was a barrier for libraries wanting to be involved in cultural activities.

## SECTION II: ANALYSIS

This section discusses relationships found among variables in the study. A total of nine program types were examined in the analysis: book discussions, creative writing programs, author presentations/readings, reading incentive programs, lecture series, musical performances, dance performances, dramatic performances, and film series. Region, population, and per capita support were primary ways of examining these data. The analysis process also looked for statistically significant relationships in funding, collaboration, the library’s cultural role, and ALA initiatives.

The chi square test was used in cases where a test of significance was performed. When the text of this section refers to a “statistically significant” result, this means the chi square test was used. The significance level used for deciding if the test (relationship) was significant was less than .05 ( $p < .05$ ). In many cases, the actual significance level was less than .01. The significance level indicates the degree of certainty of the result. For a significance level of .05, the researcher can be 95 percent confident that the result is true for the entire population (in this case, libraries serving 5,000 or more and meeting the other sampling criteria).

### REGION

Libraries were grouped into four geographic regions. The number of libraries in each region and the percent of total libraries (n=1229) are found in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
REGION

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of libraries</i>	<i>Percent of the total</i>
North Atlantic	360	29.3
Great Lakes and Plains	389	31.7
Southeast	238	19.4
West and Southwest	242	19.7

Differences exist by region on the percent of libraries offering each type of program; all

but two of these are statistically significant. There was no significant difference by region for creative writing workshops and dramatic performances. The regions with the most participation in a type of programming varies. The Great Lakes/Plains and North Atlantic regions are most likely to offer book discussion programs (66.7%, n=387, and 66.0%, n=359), with 57.0% (n=237) of the libraries offering these in the Southeast and 49.6% (n=242) in the West/Southwest region. In contrast, the West/Southwest and Southeast regions are more likely to offer author presentations/readings (66.1%, n=239, and 65.8%, n=234). The North Atlantic region has 58.0% (n=357) of its libraries offering author programs, and the Great Lakes/Plains region 52.5% (n=387).

Among the literary programs, the most dramatic difference by region is with reading incentive programs. The Great Lakes/Plains region is clearly the center of this type of activity, with 41.3% of the libraries offering reading incentive programs (n=385). The West/Southwest region is the next highest, but with only 15.2% (n=237) of the libraries involved in this kind of service. The North Atlantic region has 8.2% (n=353) libraries doing reading incentive programs and the Southeast region 8.1% (n=236).

Among the remaining four program types (lecture, music, dance, and film), the North Atlantic region is the most likely to offer all but dance programs. The West/Southwest region leads in that category, with 19.4% (n=242) of the libraries offering dance performances.

Locally-developed cultural exhibits are most likely to be found in libraries in the Southeast region (74.4%, n=195) and the North Atlantic region (73.3%, n=322). For the West/Southwest region, 71.6 percent of the libraries (n=211) hosted local exhibits, and in the Great Lakes/Plains region, 64.2 percent (n=349).

For traveling cultural exhibits, the Southeast region was the most likely location, with 49.7 percent of the libraries (n=151) reporting this activity. The West/Southwest region had 52.1 percent (n=163), the North Atlantic region 32.1 percent (n=184), and Great Lakes/Plains region 29.7 percent (n=259).

## **POPULATION**

Libraries were grouped into eight population categories. The number of libraries in each population category and the percent of total libraries (n=1229) are found in Table 2. The small number of libraries in the 5,000 to 9,999 population group (109) reflects the use of other selection criteria for the sample: at least \$100,000 budget, at least one MLS-degree staff person, at least two full-time staff, and open at least 40 hours per week. All libraries serving 100,000 people or more were included in the study.

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TABLE 2

## POPULATION

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<i>Population</i>	<i>Number of libraries</i>	<i>Percent of the total</i>
Over 1 million	18	1.5
500,000 to 999,999	43	3.5
250,000 to 499,999	72	5.9
100,000 to 249,999	238	19.4
50,000 to 99,999	162	13.2
25,000 to 49,999	250	20.3
10,000 to 24,999	337	27.4
5,000 to 9,999	109	8.9

---

Population has a statistically significant relationship for all the types of activities except reading incentive programs. This is due mostly to the fact that libraries serving 250,000 people or more are the most likely to offer each type of programming. Yet, participation levels by population groups below this level do not follow this same strict pattern, suggesting that the relationship with population is weaker in libraries serving less than a quarter of a million people. The only exception to this split among the population groups was with dance programs. In this case, across all population groups, the larger the library the more likely it was that dance programs would be offered. With book discussion groups, all population groups still showed over 50% of the libraries offering this type of literary programming, making this the most common form of cultural programming across population groups.

The lack of relationship between reading incentive programs and population may be partially explained in terms of space needs. While the other types of programs require space for holding the programs, the reading incentive programs result in individual rather than in-person group activities. The size of the library and presence of a meeting room are not as critical to this type of service.

The pattern of responses by population group for locally-developed cultural exhibits shows the predominance of the largest libraries in this activity. In libraries serving over a half million people, 92.6 percent offer locally developed exhibits (n=54). Three out of four libraries offer local cultural exhibits in the mid-range population groups, and two out of three for the three smallest population groups (25,000 or less).

Libraries serving a half million or more people are the most likely to host traveling cultural exhibits (88.4%, n=43). In the mid-range populations, 45.3 percent of the libraries (n=298) host traveling exhibits. The smallest libraries (serving 25,000 or less) had only 27.9 percent (n=416) hosting traveling exhibits. This finding reflects the connection between space and traveling exhibits, with the smallest libraries lacking the space needed (or perceived to need) for housing

such an exhibit.

### PER CAPITA SUPPORT

Libraries were grouped according to per capita expenditures, using eight categories. The latest available figure for the national average per capita is \$21.98 (1996). Table 3 reports the number of libraries in each category and the percent of total libraries (n=1229).

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TABLE 3  
PER CAPITA SUPPORT

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<i>Per capita support</i>	<i>Number of libraries</i>	<i>Percent of total</i>
Less than \$10.00	165	13.4
\$10.01 to \$15.00	241	19.6
\$15.01 to \$20.00	214	17.4
\$20.01 to \$25.00	199	16.2
\$25.01 to \$30.00	110	9.0
\$30.01 to \$40.00	144	11.7
\$40.01 to \$50.00	67	5.5
Over \$50.00	89	7.2

---

Local operating budgets are a factor in offering cultural programming. The relationships between per capita support (operating expenses divided by service population) and all the types of programs are statistically significant. Not surprisingly, the most dramatic differences in the percentage of libraries offering each type of programming are seen when comparing the lowest level of per capita support and the highest. Table 4 shows the percentage of libraries on these two categories for each of the program types.

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TABLE 4

## PROGRAM TYPE AND PER CAPITA SUPPORT

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<i>Program Type</i>	<i>Less than \$10 per capita</i>	<i>Over \$50 per capita n=89</i>
Book discussions	36.6% (n=164)	82.0%
Creative writing	9.9% (n=161)	36.0%
Author presentations	47.5% (n=162)	73.9% (n=88)
Reading incentive	13.0% (n=161)	28.1%
Lectures	26.1% (n=165)	59.6%
Musical programs	23.0% (n=165)	69.7%
Dance programs	6.7% (n=165)	27.0%
Dramatic programs	8.5% (n=165)	33.7%
Film series	9.1% (n=165)	39.3%

---

The relationship between hosting locally developed cultural exhibits and per capita support was statistically significant, but this was primarily the result of the lowest and highest per capita support categories. For libraries with less than \$10.00 per capita support, 60.0 percent (n=135) used locally developed exhibits. For libraries with more than \$40.00 per capita support, 85.2 percent (n=149) hosted these exhibits. For traveling exhibits, there was no statistically significant relationship with per capita support. The percentage hosting traveling exhibits followed no pattern when examined by per capita support.

### **CLUSTERING OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

Exploratory analysis was conducted on the nine cultural program types to try to discern if a “clustering” effect was occurring. This would mean that libraries might be grouped according to a family of program types, with certain types occurring in the same library.

Using a bivariate analysis, each of the nine activities was examined in relation to the other eight activities. With the exception of most of the analyses involving reading incentive programs, statistically significant relationships were found in the program pairs. Among the most notable findings were the relationships between book discussion groups and author events and the library offering lecture series, music programs, dance, drama, and film. In all these cases, more than three out of four libraries offered book discussion groups or author events along with the other program types. While promising, this analysis is only a first step in studying a cluster effect. Further analysis would be needed to determine if more than two program types cluster together.

### **LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT**

In order to further explore relationships between programming and other study variables, a

new variable called *level of involvement in cultural programming* was calculated. This variable would describe the range of programming offered by each library, from zero to nine types of activities. To calculate this new measure, a formula was developed that used the following nine items from the survey:

- Question 1a. Offer book discussions
- Question 2a. Offer creative writing workshops
- Question 3a. Offer author programs
- Question 4a. Offer adult reading incentive
- Question 7.1 Offer lecture series
- Question 7.2 Offer musical performances
- Question 7.3 Offer dance performances
- Question 7.4 Offer dramatic performances
- Question 7.5 Offer film series

The measure is the sum of the number of “yes” responses to each of the program types for each library. The variable could be calculated for 1,188 libraries (96.7%, n=1229). The importance of this new measure is that it provides a figure for library involvement across the different types of cultural activities. The results show that 85.6% of public libraries offer cultural programming (n=1188). This expands the picture of public library involvement beyond simple reporting of frequencies by individual type of programming. Table 5 shows the percentage of libraries for each level of involvement.

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TABLE 5  
LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

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<i>Total number of program areas</i>	<i>Percent of total responses</i>
0	14.4
1	14.9
2	17.0
3	14.7
4	13.7
5	9.3
6	8.2
7	4.2
8	2.8
9	0.8

---

In order to conduct additional analyses, it was necessary to regroup these levels into four involvement categories: none, basic (1 to 3 types of activities), moderate (4 to 6), and high (7 to 9). This regrouping allowed for the number of cases needed to conduct the chi square test.

Libraries in all regions showed involvement in cultural activities, with the largest total percentage in the North Atlantic (87.6%, n=346) and Great Lakes/Plains (87.0%, n=376) regions. Moderate and high levels of involvement were more likely to be found in the North Atlantic region. In the North Atlantic region, 45.1% of the libraries were in these two categories, with the West/Southwest region having 39.6%, Great Lakes/Plains 35.9%, and Southeast 34.2%. Table 6 shows level of involvement by region.

TABLE 6  
INVOLVEMENT BY REGION

<i>Level of involvement</i>	<i>North Atlantic</i> n=346	<i>Great Lakes/ Plains</i> n=376	<i>Southeast</i> n=231	<i>West/ Southwest</i> n=235
None	12.4%	13.0%	16.0%	17.9%
Basic	42.5%	51.1%	49.8%	42.6%
Moderate	35.3%	29.8%	28.1%	30.6%
High	9.8%	6.1%	6.1%	8.9%

When examined by population, the three largest groups show a greater level of participation than the overall percentage of libraries involved in cultural programming (85.6%). All of the libraries in the million-plus category offer cultural programs. In both the moderate and high levels of involvement, the larger the library the more likely it is to be in the upper two categories of activity. Table 7 summarizes these results.

TABLE 7  
POPULATION AND LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

<i>Population</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>n</i>
250,000 or more	6.1%	16.0%	51.9%	26.0%	131
100,000 to 249,999	14.1%	39.2%	36.6%	10.1%	227
50,000 to 99,999	14.1%	42.9%	35.9%	7.1%	156
25,000 to 49,999	14.6%	54.1%	26.4%	4.9%	246
10,000 to 24,999	18.9%	53.2%	24.5%	3.4%	323
5,000 to 9,999	11.4%	68.6%	19.0%	1.0%	105

#### **FUNDING**

Funding is a factor in the level of involvement at the lowest level of support. Using per

capita support (total operating expenditures divided by service population) as a resource measure, the libraries with the lowest per capita support (less than \$10.00) are the least likely to do cultural programs and represent the largest percentage of libraries that do no cultural programming. Table 8 shows the relationship between per capita support and offering cultural programming.

TABLE 8  
PER CAPITA SUPPORT AND OFFERING PROGRAMS

<i>Per capita support</i>	<i>Offer programs</i>	<i>Do not offer programs</i>	<i>n</i>
Less than \$10.00	69.4%	30.6%	157
\$10.01 to \$15.00	85.5%	14.5%	234
\$15.01 to \$20.00	83.6%	16.4%	207
\$20.01 to \$25.00	87.4%	12.6%	191
\$25.01 to \$30.00	93.5%	6.5%	107
\$30.01 to \$40.00	87.8%	12.2%	139
\$40.01 to \$50.00	93.8%	6.2%	65
Over \$50.00	96.6%	3.4%	88

Another indicator of library support for programming is a separate line item for adult programming. A total of 244 libraries (24.1%, n=1064) had a separate line item for adult programming. The presence of a separate line item for adult programming is related to the level of involvement in cultural programming. As that number increases, so does the likelihood of a separate programming budget. When comparing the three involvement categories with the presence of a separate adult programming budget, a statistically significant difference was found. Table 9 summarizes the data (n=960).

TABLE 9  
LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND BUDGET LINE

<i>Level of activity</i>	<i>Separate budget line</i>	<i>No budget line</i>	<i>With children's</i>	<i>n</i>
Basic	16.5%	68.1%	15.3%	502
Moderate	31.1%	50.8%	18.0%	366
High	47.8%	39.1%	13.0%	92

There was no statistical relationship between the number of outside funding sources used for programming and per capita support.

## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Participation of the library Friends group in the library's cultural programming effort was common, with three out of four libraries working with the Friends. This collaboration was a factor in library programming, with the most active libraries most likely to collaborate with the Friends. Table 10 summarizes this data (n=943).

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TABLE 10  
LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH FRIENDS

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<i>Level of involvement</i>	<i>Collaborate</i>	<i>No collaboration</i>	<i>n</i>
Basic	72.3%	27.7%	495
Moderate	79.9%	20.1%	363
High	87.1%	12.9%	85

---

There were regional differences in the percent of libraries collaborating with Friends. The West/Southwest and Southeast had the greatest percentage of libraries cooperating with Friends (82.8%, n=203, and 80.6%, n=201). The Great Lakes/Plains region had 70.8% (n=332) of the libraries working with Friends, and the North Atlantic region had 67.7% (n=310). When examined by population, libraries serving 50,000 or more people were more likely to collaborate with the Friends group in cultural programming. The amount of local operating dollars per capita had no relationship to collaborating with Friends, suggesting that Friends involvement was not necessarily being motivated by lack of local dollars for library support.

A major contribution from the Friends group was funding. Funding from Friends was more common in libraries with the higher level of involvement, illustrating the importance of this source of funding on the variety of cultural programming. A statistically significant difference was found between these two factors. For libraries at the basic level of involvement, 64.8 percent (n=554) used Friends funding for programming. At the moderate level, 77.6 percent (n=371) had Friend's financial support. At the high level, 83.7 percent (n=92) used Friend's funding.

## CULTURAL ROLE OF THE LIBRARY

The level of involvement in cultural programming is clearly linked to the centrality of programming to the library mission. Philosophy seems to mirror practice, with a statistically significant relationship between these two variables. Table 11 summarizes the findings on level of involvement and centrality to mission (n=1154).

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TABLE 11  
LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT AND CENTRALITY TO MISSION

<i>Level of involvement</i>	<i>Central to mission</i>	<i>Not central</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>n</i>
None	10.9%	83.0%	6.1%	165
Basic	35.1%	53.7%	11.2%	536
Moderate	69.6%	25.7%	4.7%	362
High	91.2%	7.7%	1.1%	91

The responses on centrality also were examined in relation to whether a library director or staff person had completed the questionnaire. A statistically significant difference was found between responses from these two groups. An examination of the centrality question by position of the respondent showed that 54.1% of the staff (n=566) rated cultural programs central to the library's mission, while only 41.3% of the directors did (n=564).

This difference between library directors and staff also was found in most of the rating scales on level of commitment to library cultural programming. When asked about the commitment of library staff, 8.7% of the directors (n=564) reported "no commitment." This same response was given by 6.2% of the staff (n=569). At the upper end of the scale, the response "absolute commitment" was chosen by 2.7% of the directors and 5.6% of the staff. In addition to the library staff rating scale, the differences between director and staff responses were statistically significant on the commitment of the library board, community, and self to cultural programming. In all of these, the staff ranks the commitment higher than the director.

In the responses to the rating of their own commitment, 18.1% of the directors (n=568) reported that they were absolutely committed to cultural programming and 26.7% (n=569) of the staff reported the same. There was no significant difference between the groups on the perception of library management commitment to library cultural programming.

Averages for each rating scale on levels of commitment also were calculated for director and staff respondents. In all groups, library staff respondents had a higher average rating than the directors who responded. For library staff, the perceived level of commitment had an average rating of 2.8 by directors and 3.0 by staff. For library management, directors had an average of 3.3 and staff 3.4. The difference between director and staff perceptions was similar for the remaining groups: 2.9 and 3.1 for library board, 2.7 and 3.0 for community, and 3.4 and 3.7 for respondents themselves.

## **COMMUNITY**

The presence of a cultural community influences the library in its programming choices. For communities with higher levels of literary and cultural programming, the library was more

likely to offer similar programming. The library is more likely to contribute to an existing cultural/literacy community than meeting an unmet need in the community. This pattern is illustrated in Tables 12 (n=1174) and 13 (n=1173).

TABLE 12  
AVAILABILITY OF LITERARY PROGRAMMING AND LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

<i>Availability</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>n</i>
Not available	34.5%	54.0%	10.3%	1.2%	87
Limited	19.6%	55.4%	21.2%	3.8%	316
Somewhat	11.4%	48.1%	33.2%	7.3%	289
Moderate	10.1%	42.5%	41.3%	6.1%	247
High	8.1%	34.5%	39.6%	17.9%	235

TABLE 13  
AVAILABILITY OF OTHER CULTURAL PROGRAMMING AND  
LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

<i>Availability</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>n</i>
Not available	29.5%	50.0%	13.6%	6.8%	44
Limited	19.6%	55.4%	22.1%	2.9%	204
Somewhat	19.1%	49.8%	25.8%	5.3%	225
Moderate	10.7%	49.7%	32.2%	7.4%	298
High	9.7%	37.3%	40.8%	12.2%	402

When examining individual types of literary programming, this pattern also is seen. With book discussion programs, of the libraries offering this type of program, only 5.1% (n=743) reported no literary programming in the community. For those libraries reporting creative writing workshops, only 2.8% (n=214) described their communities as having no literary programming. In comparison, 33.2% who offered creative writing sessions described their communities as having highly available literary programming. The author presentations/readings data perform similarly, with only 3.9% (n=712) of the libraries offering these programs when there was no community literary programming. In all these cases, the library's involvement in literary programming tends to be more active in communities where at least limited community literary

programming exists.

## **ALA INITIATIVES**

The literary programming initiatives of the American Library Association are part of the activity and knowledge base of libraries offering literary programming. There was a statistically significant difference found between libraries that offered programs and those that did not in their awareness of or participation in three ALA initiatives: Let's Talk About It, Writers Live at the Library, and Poets in Person.

Among the libraries that offer book discussion groups, 61.6% (n=727) were aware of or had participated in the Let's Talk About It program. One in four of the libraries that offered book discussion groups has directly participated in Let's Talk About It (26.1%). Libraries offering author presentations/readings also knew about this initiative, with 63.4% (n=699) aware of or participating in Let's Talk About It. As was the case with the book discussion group, one in four libraries that offered author programs had directly participated in Let's Talk About It (25.0%).

Writers Live at the Library, a younger initiative than Let's Talk About It, was familiar to over half of the libraries doing book discussions (54.8%, n=723). A similar pattern was found with libraries offering author presentations/readings. Over half were aware of or had participated in Writers Live (55.2%, n=697).

Nearly half of the libraries with book discussions also were aware of or had participated in the Poets in Person initiative (49.8%, n=729). One in seven libraries in this group has directly participated in this initiative. Over half of the libraries with author programs were aware of or had participated in Poets in Person (53.9%, n=701), with one in seven directly participating.

When these three initiatives also are examined by level of involvement, a similar pattern emerges. There is a statistically significant difference between level of involvement and awareness of the three ALA initiatives. For Let's Talk About It, 54.9 percent (n=539) of those with a basic level of involvement were aware of or had participated in this initiative. The moderate level had 64.4 percent (n=362) and the high level 68.6 percent (n=86). The Writers Live initiative also followed this pattern: basic, 46.6 percent (n=532); moderate, 59.0 percent (n=361); and high, 65.5 percent (n=87). The range is the widest for Poets in person, with the basic level having 41.0 percent (n=536), the moderate level at 54.7 percent (n=364), and the high level with 67.4 percent (n=86).

## **SECTION III: COMPARISON TO OTHER STUDIES**

The cultural programs survey that is summarized in this report is unique. There has been no comparable study of adult cultural programming in public libraries. As such, this study

provides an important benchmark for future comparative studies. Although not equivalent to this study, a few reports offer insight into programming in public libraries. In addition, results of this study can be compared to a simultaneous study of public library services for school-aged youth.

## **ADULT SERVICES IN THE EIGHTIES**

A national survey was conducted on adult services in public libraries in 1986. This study used a census of all library outlets, not just library systems, serving populations of 25,000 or more. This meant that all branches received a separate questionnaire. A return rate of 63 percent was reported. Because of a difference in sampling procedures, the 1986 study does not serve as a benchmark for measuring increases in programming activities. It does, however, at least provide a glimpse at programming in public libraries during the 1980s.

Study participants were asked if they presented book talk/reviews and if they presented live programs. In the case of book talks, 54.8 percent of the libraries reported this type of activity. A larger percentage reported presenting live programs: 73.6 percent. No comparable data was collected on book talks in the current study, but the percentage of libraries offering cultural programming was collected; this would represent a subset of all live programming at a library. For libraries serving populations of 25,000 and over, 87.1 percent offered cultural programming. This suggests a higher level of involvement in adult programming now than in 1986, even though this figure only represents the cultural programming in public libraries, rather than all adult programming.

While not asked generally about targeting services, respondents in the 1986 study were asked if they “organize programming for special groups” (no definition of organize given; all other questions ask if the library “provides”). No programming was organized for special groups in 44.3 percent of the libraries. In the current study, about one in three libraries targeted cultural programming. Two groups from the 1986 are related to this current study: older adults and minorities. For older adults, 37.5 percent of the libraries organized programs. Among the libraries that currently target programming, about one in two libraries targeted specific age groups. This, however, only represents about a third of the total libraries in the current study, while in the 1986 study this question was asked of all the libraries. Organizing programming for minorities was reported by 12.0 percent of the libraries in 1986. Among those libraries that currently target their programming effort, about one in three target on the basis of ethnicity/race for book discussions and author events.

The 1986 study did examine the data for regional differences (using four regions: North, Central, Western, and South). For live programs, the North had 80.1 percent of the libraries offering live programs, the Western region had 75.6 percent, the Central 75.5 percent, and the South 68.4 percent. The four regional categories used in the current study are similar. In all cases, the percent offering cultural programming is higher than that reported in 1986, ranging from 87.6 percent in the North Atlantic region to 82.1 percent in the West/Southwest region.

The data on live programming from the 1986 study can provide an estimate of total library programming. Using this as a benchmark, the current study results suggest an increase in programming activities in libraries serving populations of 25,000 or over. Like the 1986 study, differences were found in this study when the figures are grouped by region. No statistically significant differences could be found among population groups on the live programming question in the 1986 study. In the current study, the differences occurred chiefly among the largest population groups (serving 250,000 or over).

## **NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY STATISTICS**

There are two current sources of public library data: the federal-level data collected from the states (FSCS) and the Public Library Data Service (PLDS). FSCS collects data on attendance at programs for children but does not collect a comparable figure for adult programming. PLDS reports on annual program attendance but this figure is a combination of attendance from children's and adult programming. In the 1998 PLDS report, however, special questions were asked about financial practices in libraries. This information serves as an interesting comparison to the funding sources used for adult cultural programming. The most useful comparisons are for non-governmental sources. Friends are a major source of funds for libraries in general (86.1%, n=775). This compares to 67.7 percent (n=1147) of the libraries that reported Friends as a source of funding for adult cultural programming.

Library foundations were a source of funds for 26.8 percent of the PLDS libraries, compared to 10.8 percent of the libraries doing cultural programming. Overall, a larger percentage of PLDS libraries used the same outside funding sources than the percentage of libraries using these sources for cultural programming. This suggests an opportunity for libraries to further tap into alternative funding sources to support the cultural programming effort.

## **LEVEL OF COLLABORATION**

Three conference calls with experienced programming people in libraries and other organizations were used to help interpret the initial findings from this study. One theme that emerged from these discussions was the role of collaboration in offering cultural programming. The perception was that collaboration was more characteristic of current library programming than in the previous decades. No studies on levels of collaboration in public libraries were found. An examination of the literature from the 60s and 70s supported the concept of cooperation, but no specific evidence could be found to document the degree of collaboration.

The last set of national public library standards (1966) tended to focus on cooperation among libraries rather than other groups or agencies. In a summary of these standards, Norton (1969) concluded that the "... library should act as a clearinghouse for information about community organizations and offer these groups help in program planning and other assistance" (9). Group activities were encouraged, yet not linked specifically to collaboration. A parallel standards document for library services for adults (ALA 1966) recommends that "the library

provide materials and services for groups and other institutions and agencies through cooperative arrangements and library-sponsored programs” (6). Details in this document focus on assisting groups with program planning.

A 1967 study of neighborhood branches examined 33 libraries and found that “cooperative programs using staff and resources from several agencies have been tried in many areas” (National Book Committee, 15). The Committee concluded that “most important is library participation in the whole process of community change and development by interaction of the Library Center staff with other workers and agencies in planning and operating programs ...” (26). This level of cooperation, however, is not emphasized in the final recommendations of the report.

The Public Library Association prepared a public library mission statement in 1979. This document focuses on the library as responsive to community needs. Among the service imperatives listed in the document, cooperation with community groups, agencies, and organizations is encouraged, although primarily for information services and for “assisting them with program development” (13). There is not strong mandate for collaborative planning for programming in this cornerstone document for public libraries.

Has the advice on and practice of collaboration and programming changed? A review of the literature of the current decade provided no clear answers to this. Two handbooks on programming in libraries did include information on potential collaborators. ALA’s Public Programs emphasizes partnerships in their training events and has designed this feature into many of their initiatives. At this point, only anecdotal evidence of changes in collaboration practices exists. The current study describes the practice in 1998, but cannot draw on comparable data about previous efforts. It can, however, serve as a benchmark for comparison to future inquiries about collaboration.

## **BENTON STUDIES**

The Benton Foundation studies of public libraries in the technological age are among the most publicized in recent library history. The first report in 1996 drew on information from library leaders, public opinion surveys, and one focus group with library users. A second phase to this study was a series of focus groups with library users conducted as a follow-up to the 1996 report. The results of both phases of the research speak broadly to the role of the library as a meeting place and as a place for human interaction.

The 1996 study reported that library leaders saw a “continuing role for the library building .... as a central and valued community meeting space” (4). Through programming and involvement in the community, library leaders saw that “libraries must be forces for positive social change in their communities” (11), yet they were concerned about competition from the super bookstores as the community meeting place (13). Further, library leaders felt that “libraries must continue their tradition of providing a window onto American culture, values, and traditions” (11). The public opinion poll found strong support for programs for children and accorded “equal

value to libraries as places” (4). Unlike the library leaders, however, the public opinion poll found that “Americans are less sure that the library is a significant community meeting place” (6).

The second phase of the study is most notable in this context for its findings from the public that they desire a “high touch” as well as “high tech” library. In light of this conclusion, public libraries might place adult programming as a feature of the “high touch” library.

While not useful for statistical comparisons to the current study, the widely publicized Benton studies do provide important context for describing the role of programming in the public library. For librarians, the rationale for conducting adult cultural programming may be grounded in the need for a balance between “bytes” and personal interactions in the modern public library.

## **PLANNING FOR RESULTS**

The interest of the public library community in cultural activities and programming is documented in the new Public Library Association supported planning process (1998). This process describes several “service responses” for use in library planning. The purpose of the service responses is to help the local library narrow its focus and establish priorities.

Five of the 13 service responses speak directly to the cultural and programming role of the public library. The five named service responses are: commons, cultural awareness, current topics and titles, lifelong learning, and local history and genealogy. In addition, given the evidence in the current survey of collaboration between the library and adult literacy services for cultural programming, a sixth service response – basic literacy – also has a direct connection. A case can be made that adult cultural programming efforts support nearly all of the other service responses as well.

The relevance of cultural programming to the work of the public library is supported by the chief planning publication of the Public Library Association. Used in conjunction with the service responses, the findings from this survey can help local libraries make the case for new and enhanced adult programming efforts.

## **PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL-AGED YOUTH**

A national survey on programs for school-aged youth, conducted by ALA and funded by the DeWitt Wallace – Reader’s Digest Fund, used the same sample and time frame as this study

of adult cultural programming. As such, the study provides a unique opportunity to compare findings on children’s and adult programming practices in public libraries.

Using comparable definitions of cultural programming, a similar level of activity is found for both groups. Children’s cultural programs were reported by 82.6 percent of the public libraries. This compares to 85.6 percent of the public libraries reporting adult cultural programs.

For children's cultural programs, the most common schedule reported was "2 to 11 times per year." This figure varied by program type for adults, with book discussion groups offered the most frequently (monthly), followed by author presentations (2 to 11 time per year).

Other than targeting on grade levels, libraries more frequently targeted adult programs than did libraries for children's programming. The youth survey, however, asked about more specific groups than did the adult programming survey.

For both school-aged youth and adults, programming activity is predicted to continue. Few respondents expected to see a decrease in effort in either youth or adult cultural programming.

Libraries worked with a broad range of collaborators when delivering both adult and children's programming. For adult programming, 86.1 percent of the libraries did some level of collaboration for adult programming; no comparable figure was reported in the youth services study. No meaningful comparisons can be made on individual collaborators, since the list used in each study differed in the categories used.

Comparisons of perceived levels of commitment were presented in a similar manner in both questionnaires. Comparable data are available for four groups: respondents, library management, library staff, and library board. In these categories, there were higher levels of commitment reported for youth services than adult cultural programs. For school-aged youth services, the commitment ratings ranged from an average of 4.6 for respondents themselves to 4.1 for the library board. For adult cultural programs, the commitment ratings ranged from 3.6 for respondents themselves to 2.9 for the library board. In both cases, however, the strongest levels of commitment were among respondents themselves and library management.

A final comparison can be made in the financial area. There was a difference found on the percentage of libraries that reported using the Friends group for financial support. For youth services, 73.5 percent reported funding from the Friends. For adult cultural programming, 67.7 percent used funds from the Friends group. Overall, there is greater use of outside funders by planners of services for school-aged youth than by those planning adult cultural programs. Individual donors were a source of funds for 38.9 percent of the libraries offering youth programming and only 15.0 percent for adult programming libraries. A similar difference is found in using corporate and/or business funds (36.9 for children's and 13.3 percent for adult) and for local service/civic groups (30.7 percent and 19.7 percent). Use of the library foundation for funding was more comparable, with 13.9 percent of the libraries reporting it as a source for youth programming and 10.4 percent for adult programming. National foundations were the only source used by more libraries for adult programming than youth programming, with 4.9 percent of the libraries reporting this as a source for adult cultural programming and 4.1 percent as a source for school-aged youth programming.

The combination of the findings from these two studies suggest that the public library is a

source for cultural programming for both school-aged youth and adults. Both make use of multiple funding sources and collaborate with other groups and organizations. The prediction is one of continued interest in and offering of programs for both groups.

## **CONCLUSION**

This brief review of relevant studies and writings provides a context for interpreting and understanding the results of this study of adult cultural programming. Adult cultural programming has been a facet of adult services for several decades, yet no figures are available to compare previous practice with the findings of this study. The information presented in this section provides a background for describing the value or rationale for adult programming and collaboration rather than an accurate picture of those efforts. The current study is important as a description of practice in the late 90s and as an exploration of the factors related to the provision of adult cultural programming. Future studies will be able to use this data as a benchmark for comparison, and libraries will be able to draw on the information in the design of adult cultural programming.