

STATISTICS TELL PART OF THE LIBRARY STORY

One of the key ways that libraries measure the community's satisfaction with services is to keep track of how heavily services are used (output measures). Another metric is to survey actual customer satisfaction rates, which is done as part of a periodic community survey by the City of Redwood City. (The last survey was conducted in 2015, and at that time 91 percent of respondents rated the library good or excellent overall.) A third measurement technique is to study outcomes — that is, whether people's knowledge, skills, confidence or behavior actually changed as a result of their use of library services.

The library has been working on an effort to collect outcome measures during 2017, but they are still in the process of being compiled, so that will be a topic for a future column. In the meantime, I wanted to take the opportunity to share some of the numbers that demonstrate just how much people use the Redwood City Public Library.

The library continues to serve its longstanding role of checking out books, movies, music, magazines and e-books to residents, although in recent years our emphasis has shifted more strongly to community

outreach and engagement, as well as programs, events and activities to bring people together at the library. In fiscal year 2016–17 (the time period for all of these figures), over 800,000 visitors came to Redwood City Public Library locations, and they checked out over 1.1 million items, including over 434,000 children's items and almost 100,000 e-books.

The circulation statistics are impressive, but something that is truly distinctive about Redwood City Public Library when compared to other library systems is the sheer number of events and the attendance. We held over 9,000 programs for children, teens, adults, seniors and families across the four library locations and Project READ, and those programs were attended by over 224,000 people! That's almost an average of three programs per year attended by every single resident of any age in Redwood City.

Another truly unique measurement of the library is its level of volunteer engagement. Last fiscal year, we had over 104,000 hours of volunteer time contributed to Project READ tutoring, Traveling Storytime visits to day cares and preschools, collection maintenance, children's homework help, personal technology coaching, and library support groups like the Friends of Redwood City Public Library, Redwood City Library Foundation and Redwood City Friends of

Literacy. Those 104,000 hours is the equivalent of 50 full-time employees, almost as many hours as the paid staff who work at the library. If you'd like to learn more about how you can get involved, feel free to visit www.redwoodcity.org/departments/library/volunteer.

The number of people who use library computers for connections to the internet has decreased dramatically over the last few years, but in its place use of our wireless networks has skyrocketed. Last year, the four libraries combined had over 1 million connections to our wireless networks.

Other key indicators that make the library proud are 65,000 active cardholders, including over 750 individual teens who visited the Downtown Library Teen Center a total of 7,200 times last year. In addition, over 980 adult learners received instruction from Project READ tutors and met at least one of their individual learning goals.

Over the next couple of months, I'll try to have some stories and impacts to share, because our work is certainly not just all about the numbers.

Editor's note: This article is supplied by Derek Wolgram, library director at the Redwood City Public Library.