

Library Collections Research: What do customers want?

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Research aims and objectives



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- The two distinct objectives for this research were:

- *To understand customer use of the library collection, and preferences in relation to collection composition*
- *To evaluate new service concepts for the library service*



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Users are getting a lot out of the current collection **Entertainment, Information and Inspiration**



- Library users are making full use of the collection for entertainment, information and inspiration
 - Many use the collection to source information on personal interests, hobbies, travel, news and current affairs, lifestyle and community events
 - Users value that the collection is free and accessible





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Users are generally making wide use of the collection

Library Collections



- Library users are making use of a wide range of materials beyond the book collection.



The library provides... Community and Belonging



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- Library users feel a sense of community and belonging when visiting BCC libraries
 - Libraries are seen as giving community members a better, more interesting and informed life



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The library provides... **Relaxation**



- Library users recognise the library as a place for peace and quiet
- Users feel comfortable and relaxed at the library, and use the library as a place for discovery and escape





The Composition of the Collection

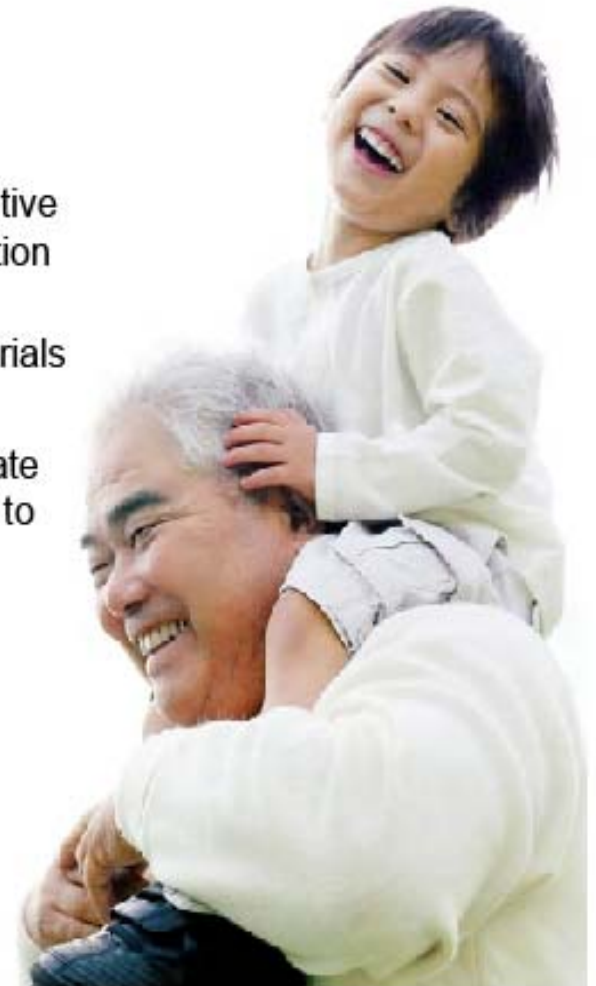




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Perceptions of the current composition of the collection are mixed

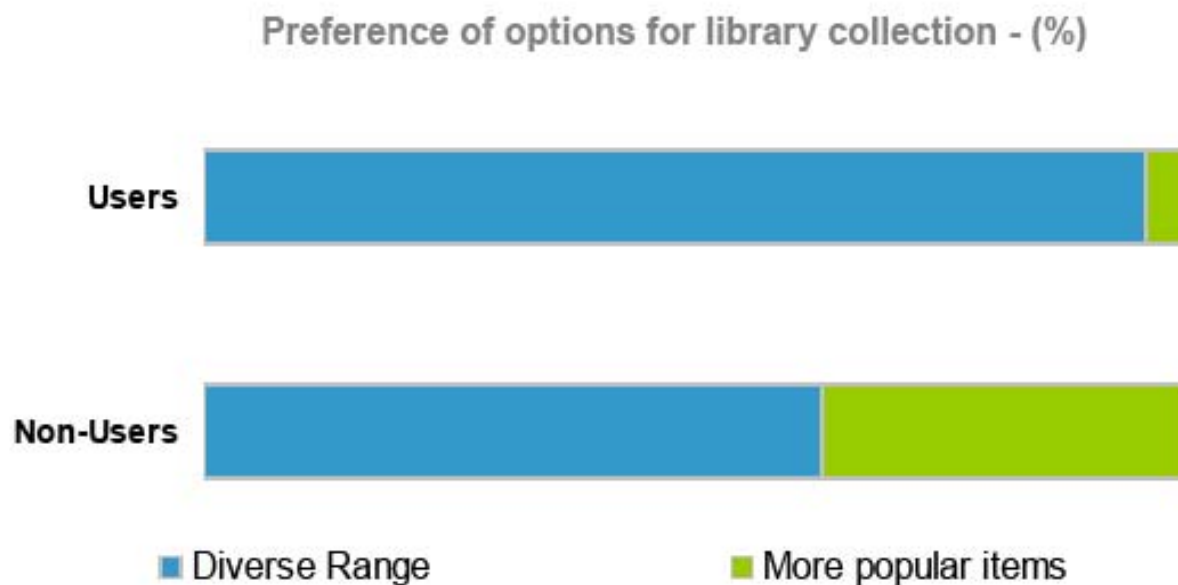
- Library users perceptions of the current balance between popular high demand items and more moderate demand items tended to be largely driven by
 - Age
 - Frequency of library usage
- Generally younger and less frequent users tended to be more negative about the availability of newer and more popular items in the collection
 - They also tended to be less willing to engage with the holds system, and to wait for access to newer and more popular materials
- Conversely, older and more regular library users tended to appreciate the convenience of the holds service, and were more willing to wait to access the more popular items





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Majority support diversity in collections over more copies of popular items



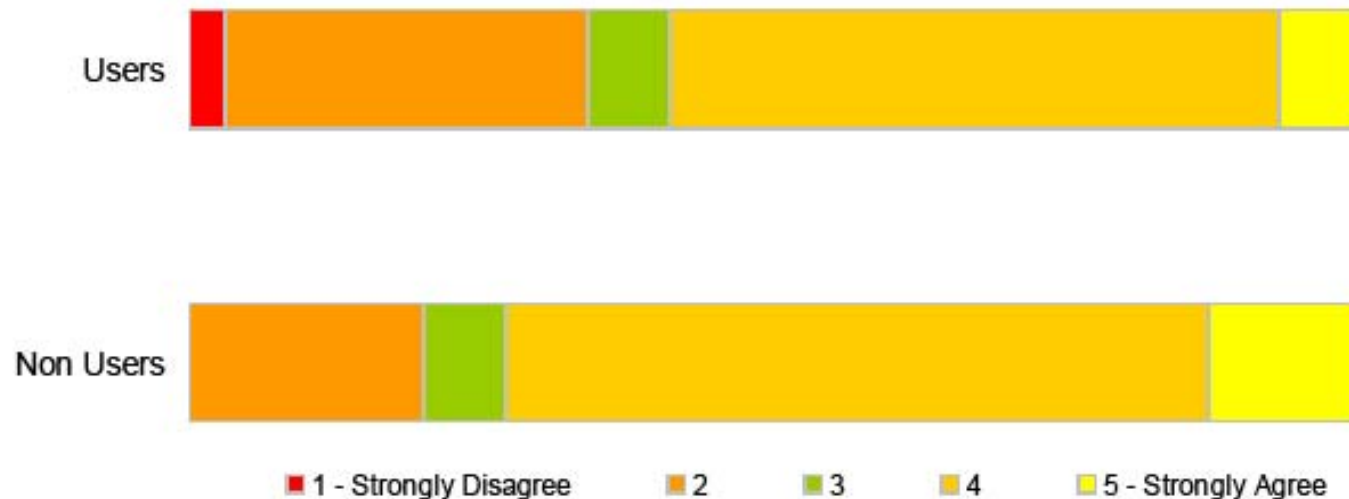
Non-users were not as strong as users in their support for a diverse range, with a strong minority favouring more popular items.

Majority agree that Council should satisfy niche interests



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Council libraries need to satisfy niche interests by delivering specialist titles of moderate demand resources (% Agree/Disagree)



Interestingly non-users tended to be slightly more in favour of satisfying niche interests.

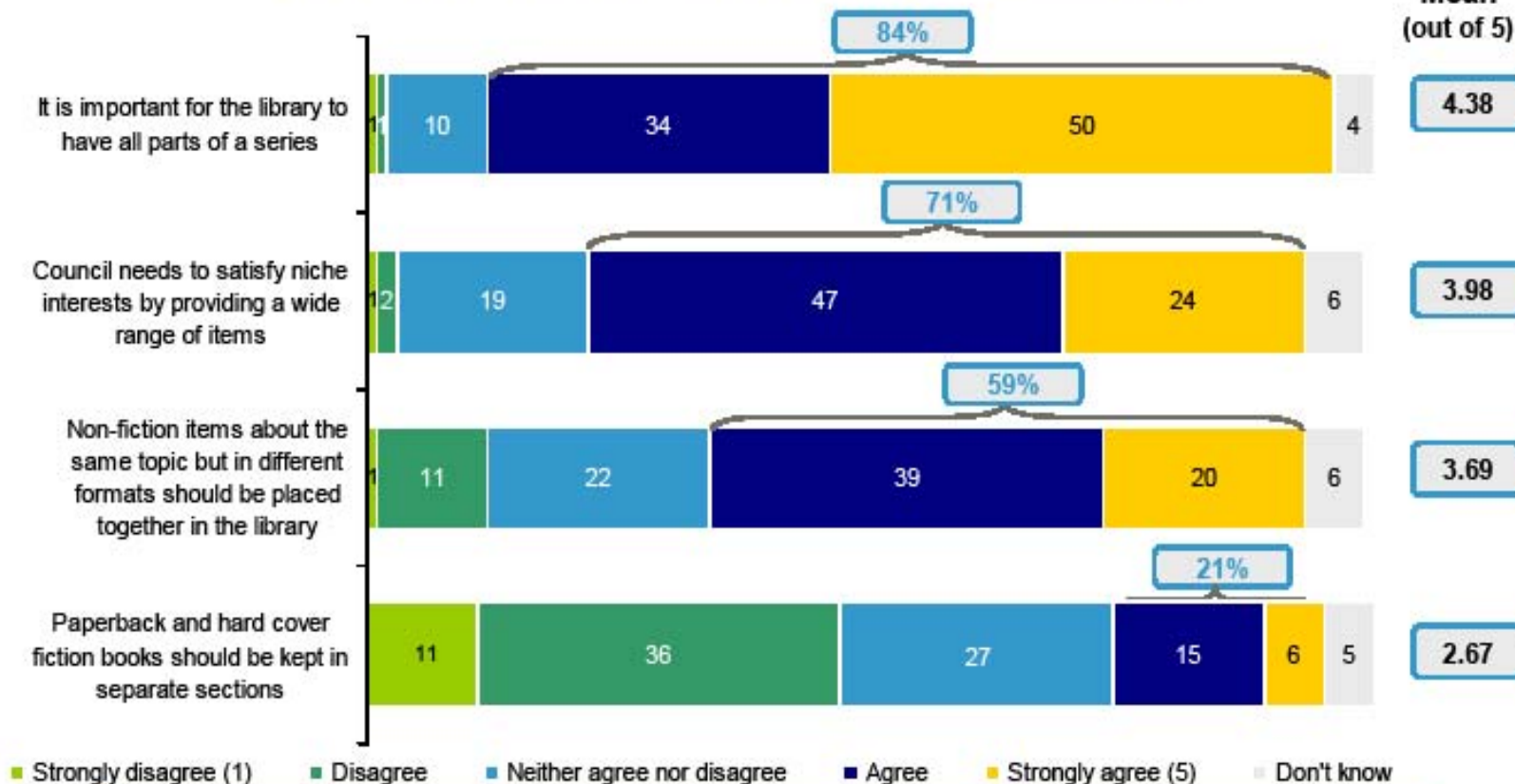


Having all parts of a series in the Collection is seen as important



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Perception of Brisbane City Council Libraries and Collection Materials (%)



Almost three in four (71%) are in agreement that the Council needs to satisfy niche interests by providing a wide range of items.



Base: Total Sample: n=566

Source: Q17. Below are some statements that people have used to describe Brisbane City Council libraries. For each one, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement.



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Majority of respondents are after a balance of both high and moderate demand items in a library collection

Balance of Materials in Collection	%		
	Total	User	Non-User
Offers a balance of both high demand, popular items and moderate demand items	85	85	85
Offers more high demand, popular items	15	15	15

“It is everybody’s library isn’t it; so you need a bit of everything for everyone.”

“The diverse range, that is what I would like. You go to the library to try to find things.”

“If there is a book of real interest to people, it would be fantastic if they could have more copies.”

“If it was a new release though, you think they’d have a few copies.”

Whilst a balance of high and moderate demand items is desired in a collection, respondents have indicated that the number of items is not equal. There is a slight preference to allocating majority of budget to high demand items.

Base: Total Sample: n=566; Library Users: n=273, Library Non-Users: n=293
Source: Q18. Which of the two options for Brisbane City Council Library collections below do you think comes closest to your needs?

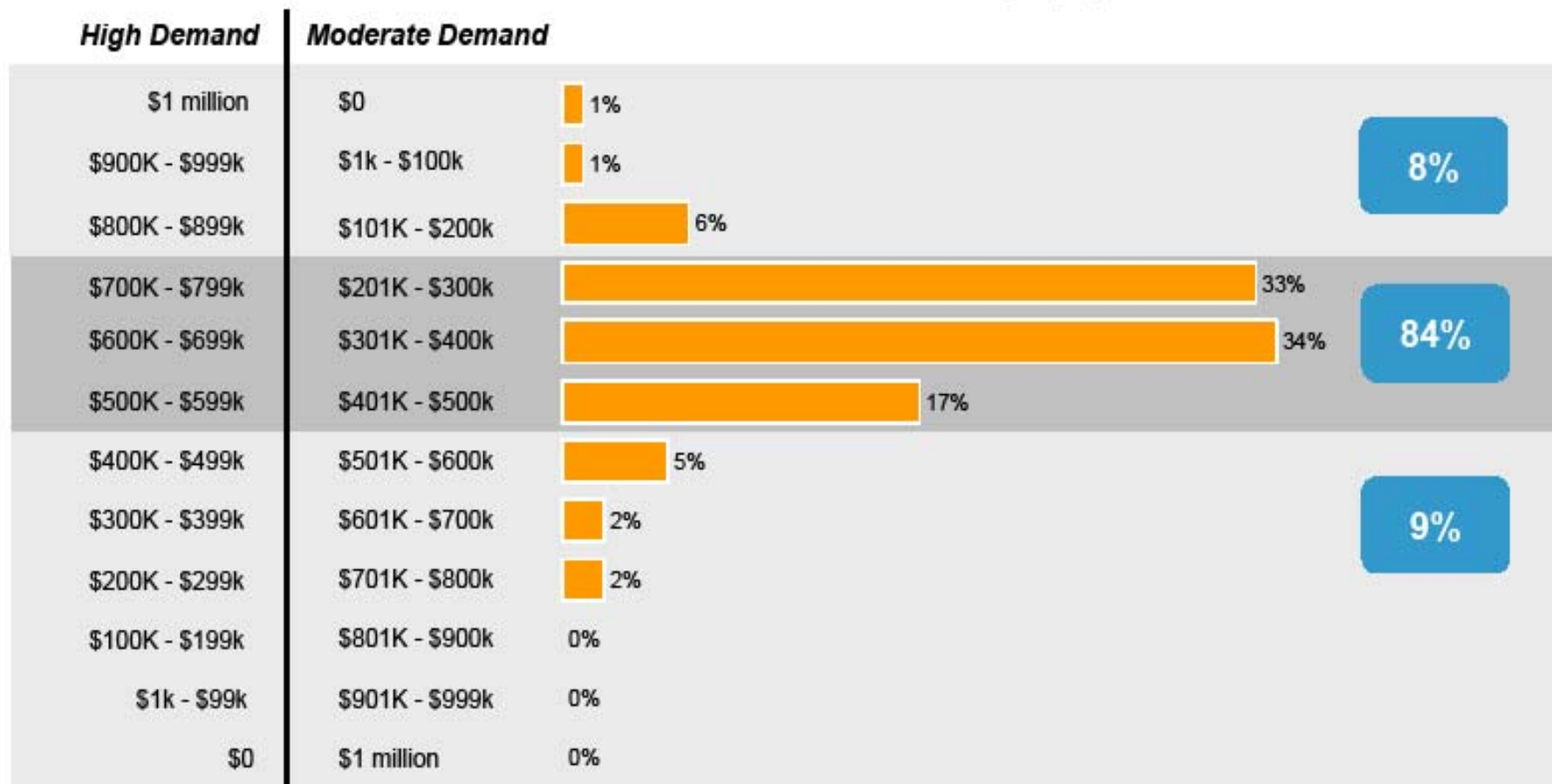


84% suggest spending 50-80% of the budget on high demand, with the remainder on moderate demand items



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Distribution of \$1 million budget (%)



Base: Total Sample: n=566

Source: Q19. If you had \$1 million dollars to spend on new materials, how much would you allocate for high demand popular items and how much for moderate demand items?

Note: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

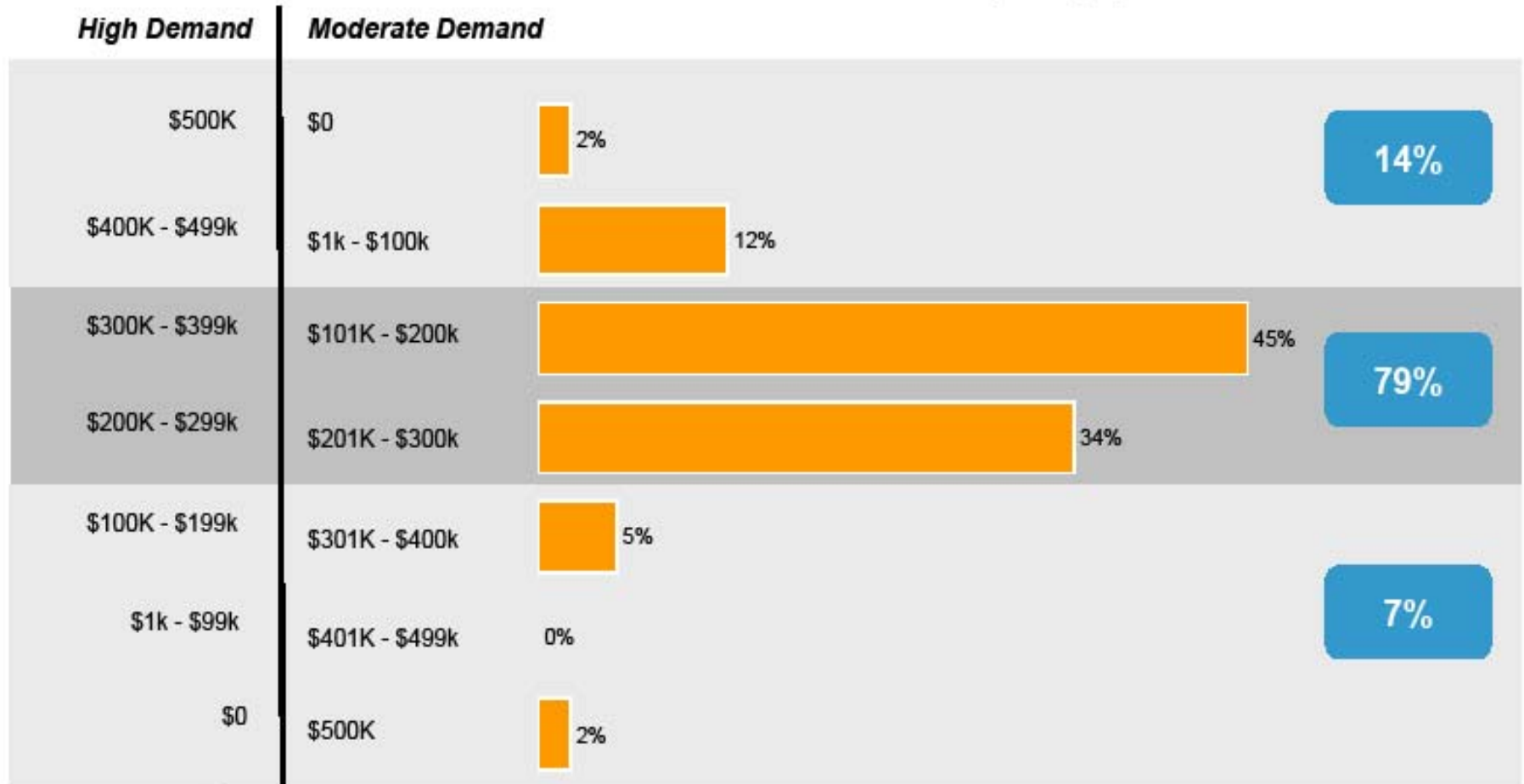


Allocation of additional spend more likely to go to high demand items



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Distribution of \$500 000 Additional Spend (%)



Base: Total Sample: n=566

Source: Q20. If the Council allocated an additional, one-off \$500,000 to spend, how would you divide it between high demand and moderate demand items?

Note: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



“I think the library should offer a wide variety of resources... While it would be nice to have multiple copies of some things – if everyone wants a new release or something that’s lovely; but if it was at the expense of having a more diverse range I would be unhappy.”





The Quality of the Collection





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Library users are accepting of older items being 'worse for wear'

- Overall when considering what was and was not acceptable, users tended to take into account not just the condition of the book, but also how easily it could be replaced
- Users did recognise that there may be some need to retain materials almost regardless of the condition

“ *A problem with getting rid of the older books that seem to be falling apart is, can they be replaced? Do we really want to throw out books that can't be replaced?* ”

- However, where it was perceived that an item was more easily replaceable, then users tended to be less forgiving of the condition

“ *The thing is that it (Harry Potter) is still in print. It is easy to replace.* ”



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New, pristine items are obviously appealing

- The **most attractive** items, with instant appeal, tended to be:
 - Hard cover books
 - Covered books
 - Clean, white pages
 - Fresh smell

“ You get attracted to things that look nice and pristine. ”

“ They are clean ”

“ They are in good condition. ”

“ I like the colour and the boldness of this one (hard cover). ”



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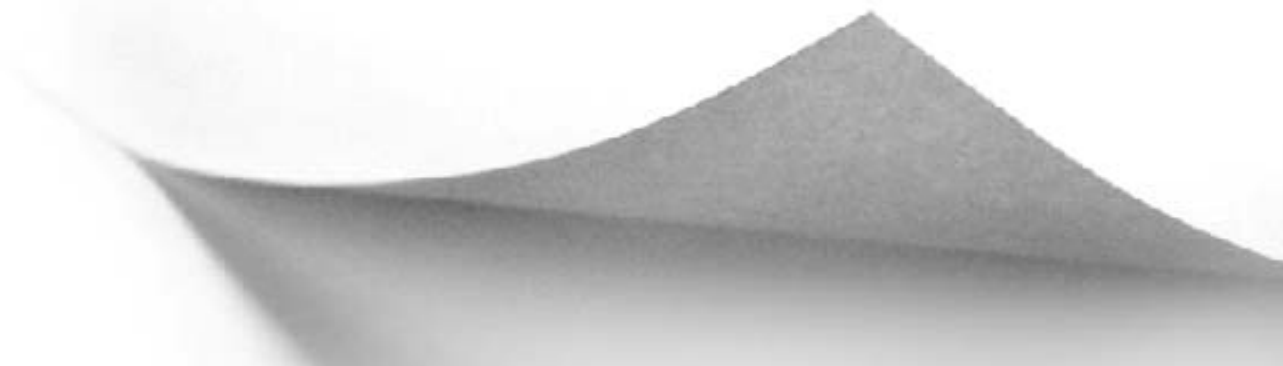
Minor damage considered acceptable

- Items slightly **less attractive but still with some appeal** tended to be
 - Those that were not brand new but still in very good condition
 - Items with only some very minor damage such as slightly turned corners, creases in the cover

“ *It's still very readable and just a bit worn because it is a popular author.* ”

“ *They are in reasonable condition.* ”

“ *It's pretty good but does have a few bent pages.* ”





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Aged and previously repaired items still considered

- Those items with **less appeal but which would be considered in certain circumstances** may have
 - Aged, 'yellowing' pages
 - Bent or creased covers / pages
 - May have signs of being repaired in the past

“ *This one has yellow pages and looks very old, but it is still intact, so I would borrow it.* ”

“ *Something about a smelly old book from the library, it's got that character.* ”

- The circumstances under which these items would be borrowed include
 - Special interest topics
 - Only copy left
 - Out-of-print materials
 - Part of a series
 - Using as a reference source in the library (not borrowing)



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Anything badly damaged, or with loose pages a turn-off

■ The types of materials with **little or no appeal for borrowing** had:

- Torn pages
- Loose or missing pages
- Badly stained pages
- Broken bindings
- Obviously damaged (chewed, wet etc.)
- Already repaired and further damaged

“ *They are unappealing, they are all pretty grubby and you wouldn't want to handle them.* ”

- Items with loose and missing pages would generally be avoided, often because users were afraid of being 'blamed' for the damage when returning the item

“ *You wouldn't want to borrow a book that had loose or broken spines, pages falling out.* ”

“ *It's held together with a rubber band - that's a bad sign.* ”

Greater tolerance for damage to special interest magazines



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- People do generally expect magazines to be in a fairly good condition.

- Magazines with 'little or no appeal' tend to be those with:

- Damaged covers (bends, rips, creases)
- Ripped and/or missing pages
- Badly bent or dog eared pages

They'd probably have to cull a lot of magazines after a while. They get terribly tatty.

- Based on the sort exercise conducted in the groups, few of the weekly magazines that are older than a few months would be considered appealing
 - There did however seem to be greater tolerance for special interest magazines

If you're really interested in the subject it doesn't really matter what condition it is in (the magazine).



Reaction to Library Concepts



Library Concepts: Descriptions: 1



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Home Delivery Service

A fee-based service. Customers can place items on hold and the item will be delivered to their home, with a reply paid satchel. The item would be subject to normal borrowing conditions such as waiting lists for popular titles. Customers when placing their holds would select 'Home Delivery' in the pick up location.

Popular Libraries

A popular library is a library where no item in the collection is more than two years old. A popular library would not offer the complete range of services of a regular library. This proposed library would be complimentary to regular services provided by Library Services.

Boutique Libraries

A 'boutique library' offers a specialization in a particular genre and only materials in this genre are available e.g. crime, romance, science fiction etc. The key benefit of this library is the depth of the collection in the chosen genre. The collection for the selected genre would be more extensive than usually available at a regular library. This proposed library would be complimentary to regular services provided by Library Services.

Pop-Up Libraries

A 'pop-up library' is a genre based library that moves around the city. Libraries may pop-up in a local shopping centre, and then relocate 3-6 months later, only to pop up again somewhere else.

Vending Machine Access

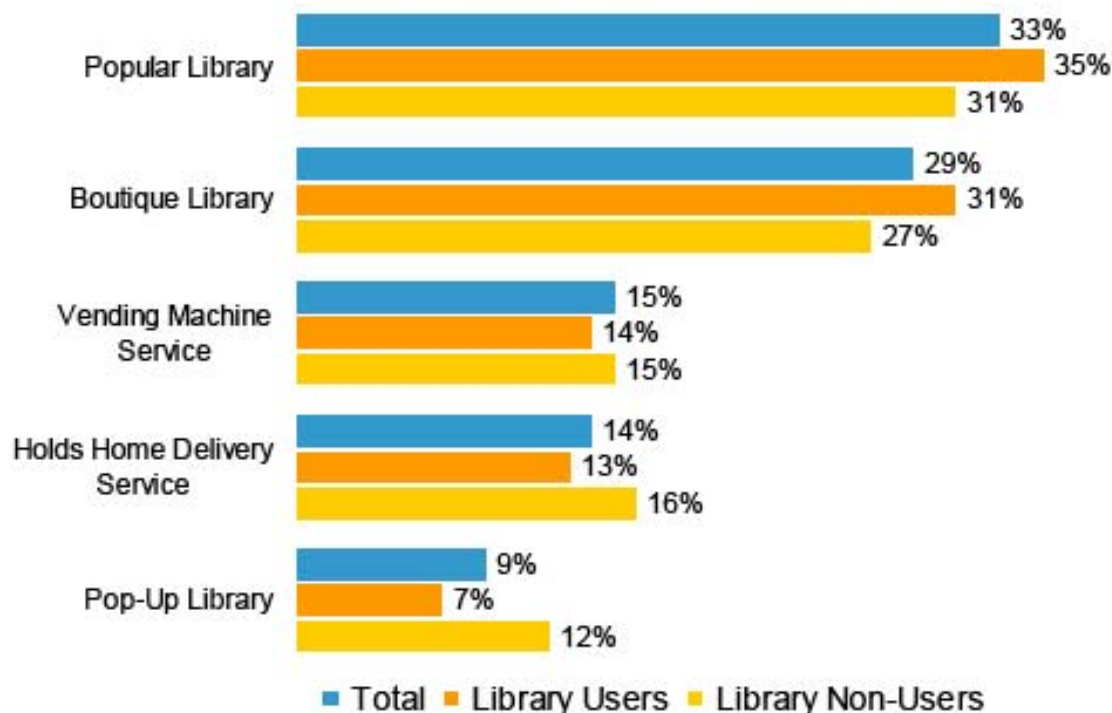
This service would enable access to a very limited borrowing collection and the collection of holds via self-service vending machines. Self-service machines would be located outside of libraries for the collection of holds or in convenient locations such as major bus and railway stations for the limited borrowing collections.



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Popular library was chosen as the most appealing concept

Most appealing library concept (%)



One in three respondents (33%) chose Popular library as the single most appealing concept.

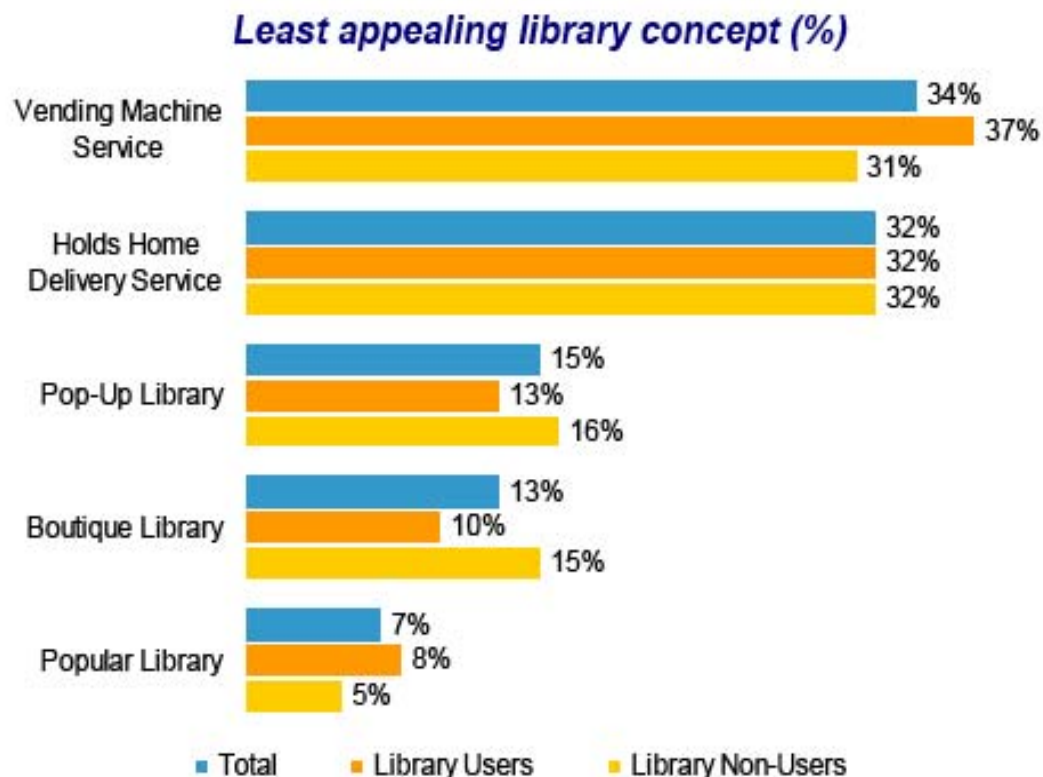
Base: Total Sample: n=566; Library Users: n=273, Library Non-Users: n=293
Source: Q41a. Now, if you had to choose only one of the concepts, which one would be the most appealing to you?





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Vending machine is seen as least appealing concept



More than one in three respondents (34%) rated Vending Machine Service as the single least appealing concept. Holds Home Delivery Service was also seen to be less appealing amongst respondents.

Base: Total Sample: n=566; Library Users: n=273, Library Non-Users: n=293
Source: Q42a. And which of these five concepts is the least appealing to you?

Executive



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- The library is seen as more than just a venue where a collection of different materials reside. Council libraries are seen as a source of local and community information and a venue for relaxation, catching up and peace and quiet.
- There was generally strong support for diversity within the collection. This reflects users' view of libraries' role; the library is there for everyone and should cater for the widest possible tastes.
- The need for a varied collection was recognised, with strong support for a balance in the collection between high demand / popular items and more moderate demand items.
- Of the five concepts tested, the Popular Library is the one that is seen as the most appealing and the one most likely to be used.
 - Driven in part by the perception that this will help keep users up-to-date with new releases.
- Whilst the Boutique library concept is also seen as appealing, those of the Pop-Up library, Vending Machines and Holds Home Delivery are generally perceived as less appealing concepts.