

Even in the Digital Age, Many Library Patrons Say Traditional Uses Are Important

The internet has already had a major impact on how people find information, and now the popularity of e-books is helping to transform Americans' reading habits. In this changing landscape, public libraries are trying to adjust their services to these new realities while still serving the needs of patrons who rely on more traditional resources.

A Pew Research Center survey conducted Oct.-Nov. 2012 found that many library patrons are eager to see libraries' digital services expand, yet also feel that print books remain important in the digital age.

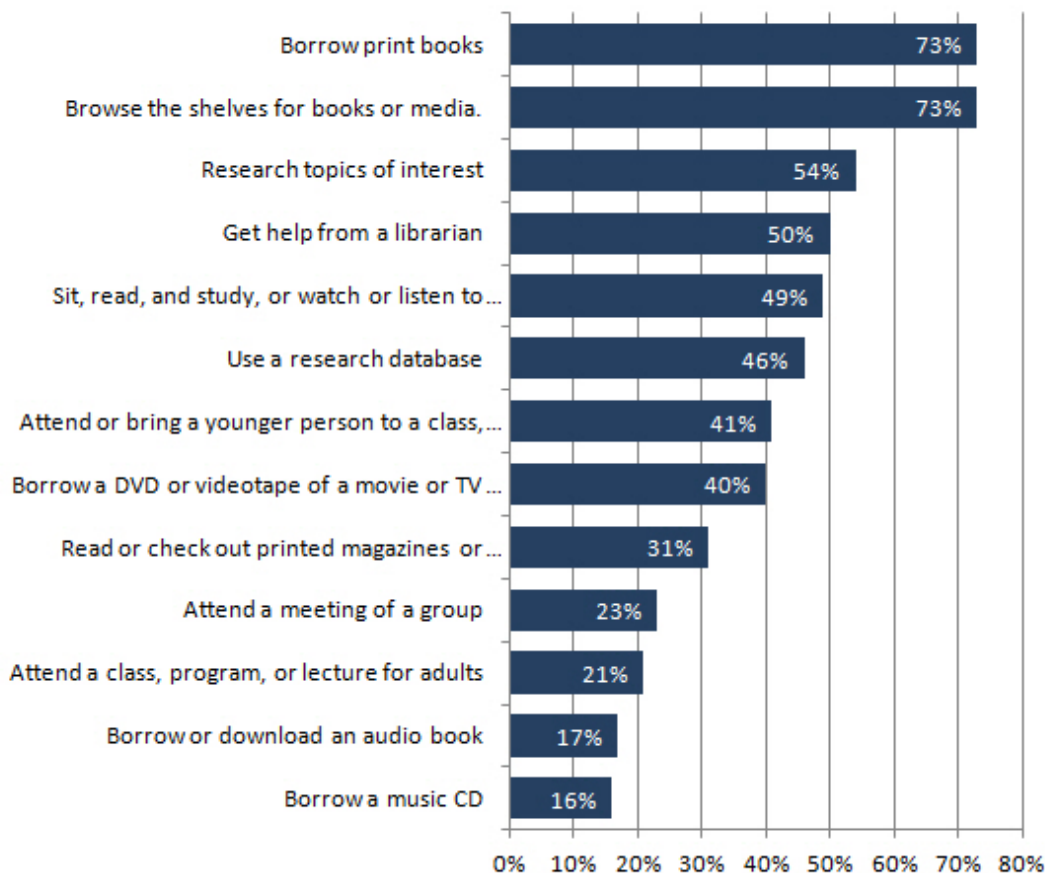
Roughly seven-in-ten (73%) of those 16 and over who visited a library or bookmobile in the past year said their top activity was borrowing print books or browsing the shelves for books or media. Women patrons were more likely than men to say they do this, as were parents of minor children, and people with at least some college experience.

In focus groups, many library patrons mentioned how they enjoyed browsing the shelves at their local public library. One liked the process of discovery — "The cover can draw you in." Even when they had reserved materials online, several liked to browse for books, movies, or music.

The next biggest categories of library use were researching topics of interest (54%) and getting help from a librarian (50%). About half (49%) said they visited libraries just to sit, read, and study, or watch or listen to media. Another 46% visited to use a research database.

What people do at libraries

Among those who have visited a library or bookmobile in the past 12 months, the % who have done the following activities



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Library Services Survey of 2,252 people age 16 and older conducted October 15-November 10, 2012. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones.