

Collection Strategy

Summary of Key Survey Themes

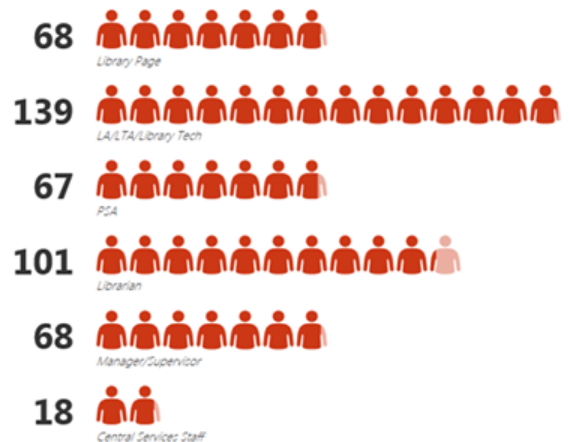
In April 2016, KCLS began exploring opinions and attitudes from all staff about KCLS collections. The survey, which ran for two weeks, focused on what staff think works well and what doesn't, as well as what KCLS should consider changing, in terms of the collection.

Survey response rates were high – a total of 462 participants! There was strong representation by all levels of staff across the System, with participation from:

- 74% of managers/supervisors
- 92% of librarians
- 68% of PSAs
- 50% of LA/LTAs

Survey participants also represented the KCLS service area in almost equal proportions: North (21%), East/Central (31.8%) and South (33.8%).

SURVEY RESPONSES BY CLASSIFICATION



PATRON USE OF COLLECTION

Some staff indicated that when they were asked by a patron to find an item they could always (0.88%) or often (19.16%) find the item on the shelf or in the catalog. **Nearly 43% reported only being able to do so “sometimes” and nearly 25% said they could rarely find it.** A closer look at the items being requested, but not found, showed the following:

1. Patrons are looking for **older books and movies, or earlier books in a series.**
2. Patrons are looking for **specialized materials** (i.e. text books, testing guides and professional manuals).
3. Patrons are looking for **new items** that are either not yet available at KCLS, or require a hold.

Overwhelmingly, the most frequent request or comment from patrons deals with the patron's ability to find the item they're looking for at their branch. Staff report that patrons often confuse an item being “available” in the catalog to mean it is available on the shelf in their preferred branch. Closely correlated is the resulting concerns from patrons about having to place a hold and particularly about the length of the wait time for their hold.

Additionally, staff report frequently hearing from patrons regarding:

- **Navigating the children's materials:** Challenges range from navigating the new picture book categories, to finding books based on Lexile or Fountas & Pinnell reading levels, finding books series shelved together.
- **The catalog:** Patrons have difficulty finding materials in the catalog and often are frustrated when the catalog says the item is available, but it cannot be found on the shelf. This concern was also raised repeatedly in the “weaknesses” of the collection section.
- **KCLS doesn't have the materials:** This occurs most frequently for patrons looking for older materials, books in a series, world language materials and specialized requests like testing guides and college materials.

While staff helpfully reported the areas where patrons experience challenges, the majority of staff noted that there is overall patron satisfaction and appreciation for the KCLS collection. On another positive note, 86% of staff reported having the knowledge/expertise they need to help patrons find the resource they want.

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STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Survey respondents rated KCLS' collection either excellent (30.9%) or very good (53.1%). When talking about the strengths of the collection, the most frequent responses addressed the large size and variety of the collection overall, the growing collection of online resources, the ability to place a hold, the healthiness of KCLS' collection budget, the speed with which items are moved between libraries, the variety of formats, and that KCLS has something for everyone.

Weeding was reported as a significant area of weakness; however, staff are almost equally divided as to the core problem. Half of staff expressed that concern about weeding discussed staff not having enough time to participate in collection maintenance activities and that the result is an uneven condition of materials in the collection. The other half of staff expressing concern about weeding cited it was "wasteful," "thoughtless" and "unnecessary." Others also expressed concerns that over-weeding is compromising the depth of the collection.

Some other interesting themes rose to the surface as staff reported weaknesses of the collection, including:

- **Inability to customize the collection to local needs and interests.** Staff reported frustration with an inability to tailor their collection to local needs and interests. Many expressed a desire to be able to change areas of their local collection not being used by patrons (i.e. by easily transferring collections between libraries) or by having a centralized purchasing model that distributes items based on in branch checkout trends.
- **Overemphasis on new items:** Many staff expressed concerns with the lack of availability of older titles, especially those by popular authors.
- **Too many copies and not enough depth:** Staff repeatedly expressed concerns with the number of copies being purchased of single titles at the expense of more variety for patrons.
- **Replacement of items.** Whether representing a gap in the collection, or when items are lost/weeded staff widely report experiencing a lack of response, or lack of a timely response, to these requests.
- **Inadequate selection of materials for diverse, marginalized and multicultural patrons, including foreign language materials, ELL and ABE materials.** Staff reported needing more of these materials, but also emphasized the need to make them easier to find (i.e. group all language materials together regardless of format).
- **Inability to give patrons what they want/need that day.** Staff often struggle with patrons not finding what they want on the shelves of their preferred branch. While the holds system is a purported strength of the System, patrons also want instant gratification.
- **Abundance of theft of items from the collection.** Many staff reported frustration with the amount of theft, especially of DVDs.
- **Lack of materials available for rigorous school assignments, career, GED and other exams.** Many staff expressed the need to have materials more readily available for students of various types; placing holds is often not feasible for patrons searching for these materials. Emphasis was also placed on the currency of testing and career materials.
- **Lack of display space.** A number of staff expressed a need for more display space to better promote the collection.
- **Lack of materials of historical relevance to local communities.** Multiple staff also mentioned that KCLS should collect local community history in various formats.

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PURCHASING LEVELS

The survey inquired as to staff's satisfaction with KCLS' levels of purchasing in two areas:

1. FORMAT

Staff were generally satisfied with the level of purchasing in all formats. Of particular interest for **increased purchasing levels** was: downloadable audio, DVDs, eBooks, databases and streaming movies, TV & music. The most significant recommendations for **reduced purchasing levels** were: Playaway audiobooks, magazines, self-published and music CDs.

2. SUBJECT

Staff recommend increasing purchases in the following areas (in priority order): **job & career information, ESL and adult basic education, world languages, homework support, self-help and self-directed learning**. The reference collection was the only area with significant responses indicating to reduce purchasing.

DESIRED CHANGES

When asked how KCLS could change the collection and/or the use of the collection budget, the following were the top suggestions (in order of frequency):

- Increase local input on selection and flexibility in local replacement allotments
- Increase spending on materials for diverse populations, including world language and ELL
- Spend more on materials supporting students, including research books and databases
- Spend more on streaming and eBooks, but keep it in proportion to use of digital materials
- Decrease spending on print reference materials
- Decrease the amount spent on Choice Reads and magazines
- Spend more on replacement copies of older or lost materials

A couple other ideas were presented as well:

- Decrease the volume of popular materials purchased so that the branches aren't left with excessive titles on the shelves when the "rush" is over.
- Reexamine minimum purchasing quantities.
- Work to align the amount of shelving in the libraries to the size and use of the collection.

LIBRARY PRACTICES

Several library practices were of significant appeal to survey respondents, including lucky day collections (69%), greater decentralization of selection and purchasing (61%) and patron-driven purchasing (53%).

It is worth noting that the "decentralization" option was appealing to staff as a movement, rather than a wholesale change. Survey respondents expressed favor for more local control in the building and maintaining of an individually balanced collection. Staff want the ability to purchase books that fit the local community.

The least appealing library practices were maintaining the status quo, creating more popular reading libraries (like the library connections), digital libraries and floating collections.

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GOALS

Two goals were most frequently prioritized by survey respondents:

- **Ensure that the collection is comprised of a wide range of topics (breadth).**
In fact, 80% of survey respondents stated that more titles, but fewer copies was most important.
- **Ensure that patrons can find themselves reflected in the collection (diversity).**

From a staff perspective, the least prioritized goals were:

- Ensure that the collection includes more content on the most important topics (depth).
- Ensure that patron' wait time is minimized (timeliness)

Having a collection comprised of high-circulating materials (popular) and a collection that can respond and adapt as strategic priorities and trends change (nimble) were not the highest, nor the lowest, priority of respondents.