

Newark Public Library Assessment and Landscape Analysis



Considerations for Strategic Planning



**Libraries
Without Borders**
US

THE NEWARK
PUBLIC LIBRARY



Methodology



Landscape Analysis



Internal Library Assessment



Strategic Plan Next Steps



Methodology

Comprehensive, Mixed-Method Research

Primary Research

Secondary Research

448

community surveys*

73%

Live in Newark

Offered in English, Spanish, French,
Portuguese, Haitian Creole

*This sample size is large enough to detect **statistically significant results** at the **97.5% confidence level** for the association between frequency of library visits and each of the survey fields.

Primary Research

Secondary Research

448

community surveys*

45

staff surveys

33

Library
stakeholder
interviews

18

community leader
interviews

*This sample size is large enough to detect **statistically significant results** at the **97.5% confidence level** for the association between frequency of library visits and each of the survey fields.

Primary Research

Secondary Research

We conducted analysis of:

- Demographics
- Library communications
- Library policies *compared to similar libraries*
- Library usage *compared to similar libraries*

Sources:

- Newark Public Library
- US Census American Community Survey
- Institute of Museum and Library Service Public Libraries Survey
- New Jersey State Library 2023 Library Data
- American Library Association
- Federal Communications Commission
- US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division
- Local news sources

What is a "similar library"?

1. Identify key **library characteristics**

Service area population Unemployment rate
Median age Median household income
Ethnic diversity index Foreign-born population
Number of paid employees Operating revenue
Number of library branches

2. Identify **similar libraries**
across NJ and US

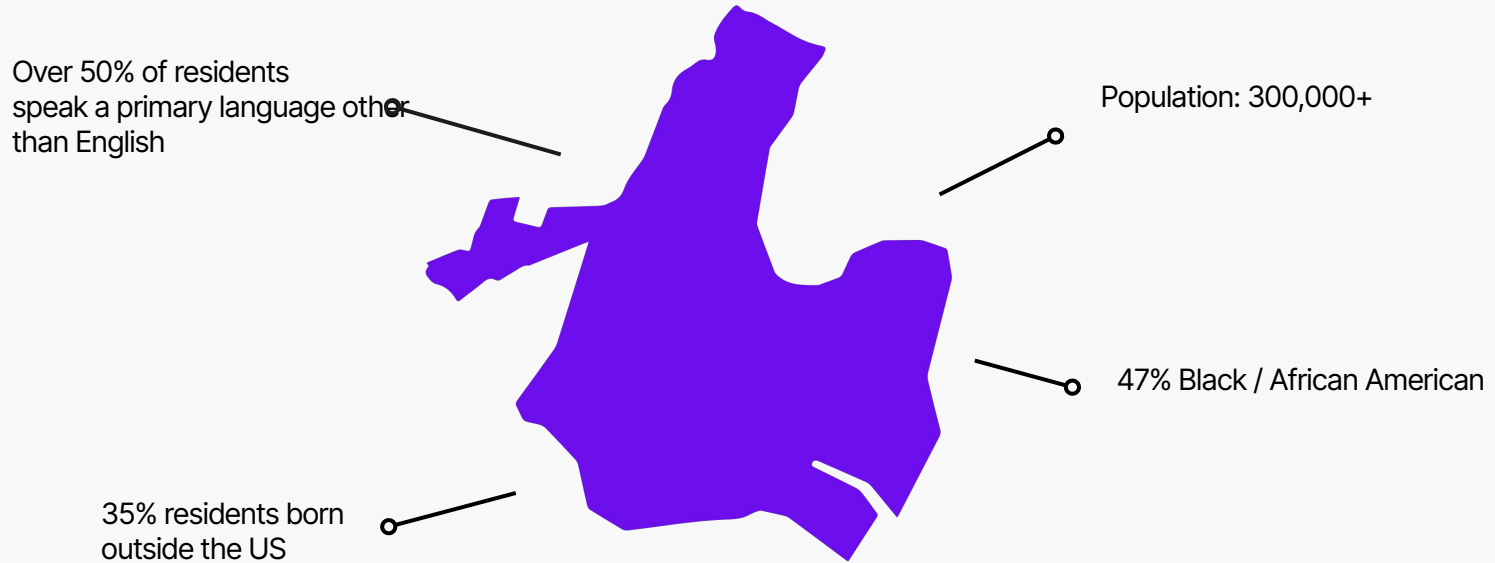
3. Standardize via
Euclidean Distance Similarity Test



Landscape Analysis

- ✦ Community Context
- ✦ Library Context

Newark is New Jersey's **most populous city.**



Due to unique **social and economic challenges**, there is a great need for social services.



PROVIDES SAFE SHELTER
ELITIST
POSITIVE IMPACT
SANCTUARY LIBRARY
KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF
OF THE CITY
A PLACE TO GET RESOURCES
OUT OF DATE
ANCHOR INSTITUTION
SAFE, EASY, WARM
INACCESSIBLE

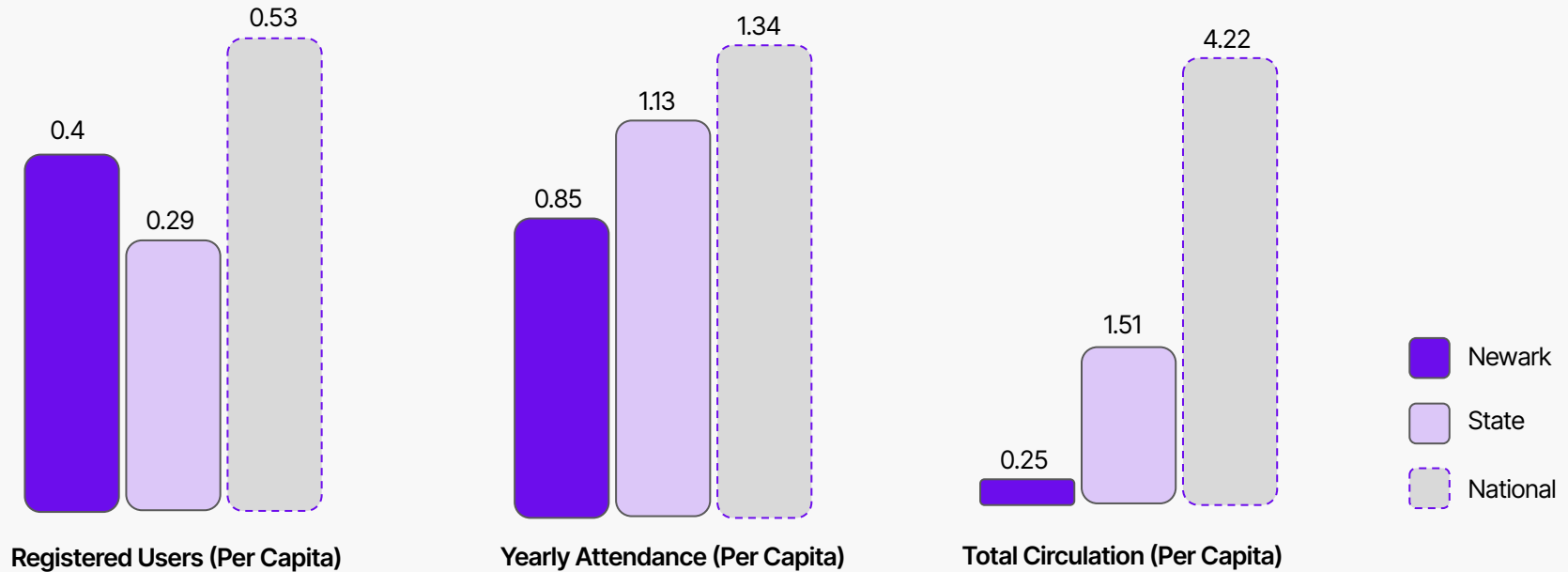
ANCHOR INSTITUTION
BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE
HELPFUL
SERVES THE COMMUNITY
ARCHIVAL HUB
STAFF LOVE HELPING PATRONS
VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE
FULFILLING JOB
NOT WELL KNOWN

PROVIDES INFORMATION
DEDICATED STAFF
CONNECTS PEOPLE
MAIN BRANCH IS PRIMARY
INSTITUTION FOR CHILDREN
LIKE A NONPROFIT COMMUNITY CENTER
USED BY KIDS AFTER SCHOOL
UNDERFUNDED

TRIES TO BE EVERYTHING
STAFF ARE FRIENDLY
HELPS PEOPLE
A PLACE FOR EVERYONE
ACCESS TO BOOKS
INCONVENIENT HOURS
A PLACE TO MEET
DISCONNECTED

I LOVE THE LIBRARY

Library Usage





Internal Library Assessment



Library-Community Partnerships



Library Promotion

- Community media
- Website
- Social media



Library Offerings

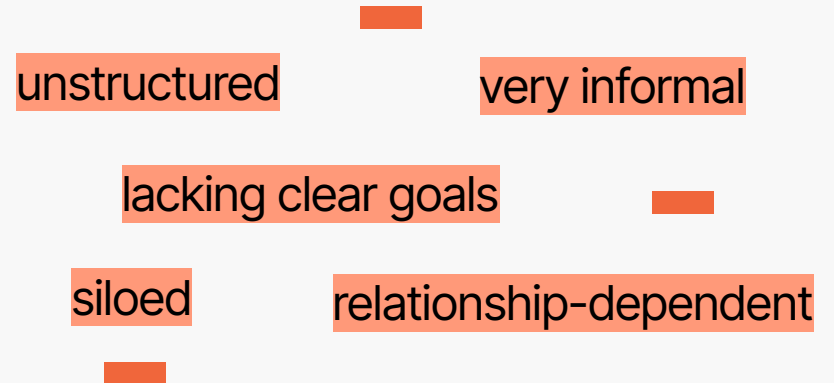
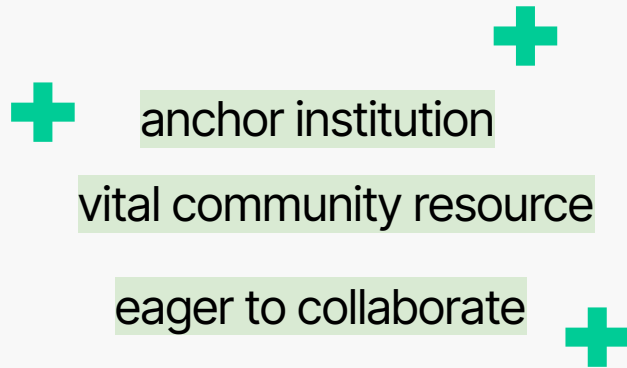
- Collections and services
- Physical spaces
- Social media



Library Policies



Library-Community Partnerships





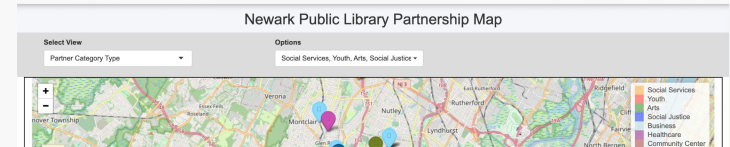
Library-Community Partnerships

Partnership Tracking Tool + Asset Map

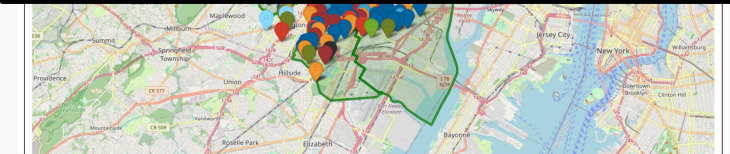
Organization Category	Name	Partnership Status	Partnership Type	Library POC	Org POC	Date of Last Contact	Notes
Business	Essex County Latino American Chamber of Commerce						
	Mend						
	2nd Home						
	4Humanity						
	7H & Madison Cares Inc.						

Partnership Tracking Tool

Education	American High School						school
	American History High School						
	Amerigroup aka Wellpoint						
	Angelo Pharmacy						
	Antibal Ramos Civil Center						
Education	Ann Street Annex						school
Education	Ann Street School						school
Education	Arts High School						school
	Aspira Inc of New Jersey						
Education	Asun Avenue Elementary School						school
	Bailey Holt Houses - connection made through East Orange						
	DOH						
	East Foundation						
Education	Bard High School Early College						school



Asset Map





Library-Community Partnerships

Considerations for Strategic Planning

INSIGHT

Done well, **partnerships** can:

- ☀ Increase library capacity for events, programs and services
- ☀ Amplify promotion efforts
- ☀ Remove barriers to access

RECOMMENDATION

Implement **a partnership tracking tool** to support system-wide practices

⇒ **Library Promotion**

- ✦ **Community Awareness**
- ✦ **Website**
- ✦ **Social media**

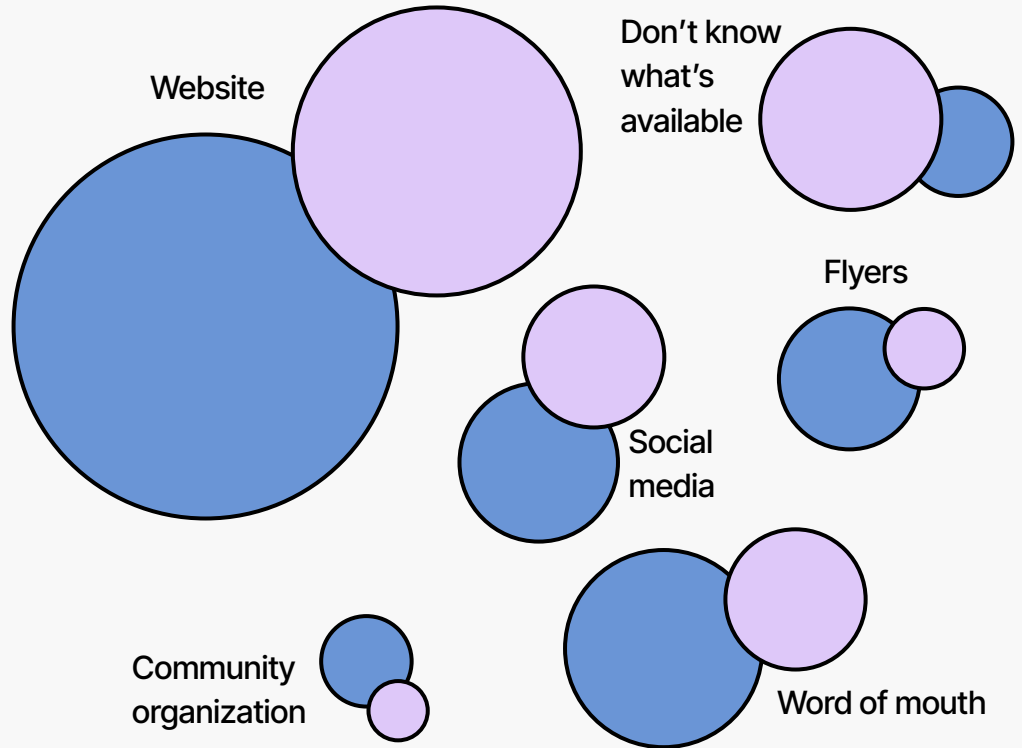
Community Awareness



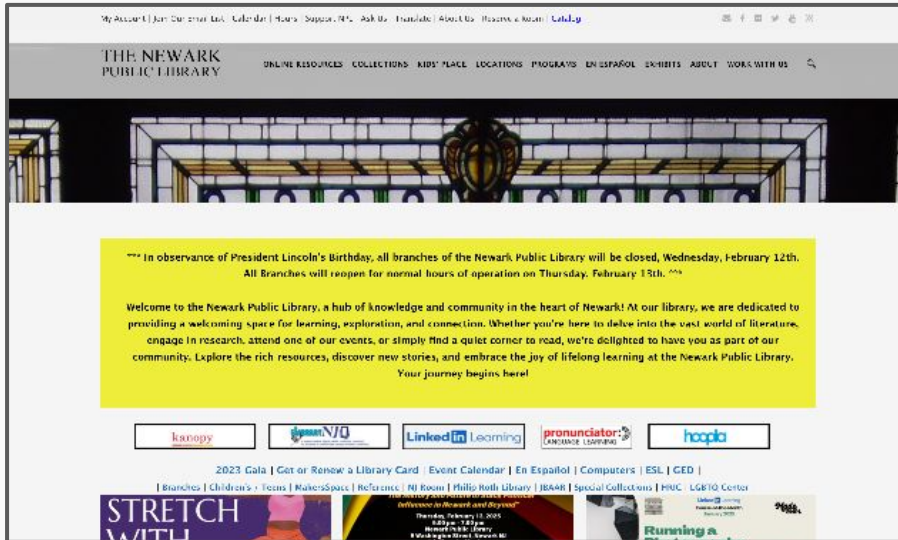
Digital promotion is an important resource for both frequent and infrequent visitors.

However,

Many community members and partner organizations say they **don't know what's available.**



Library Promotion Website

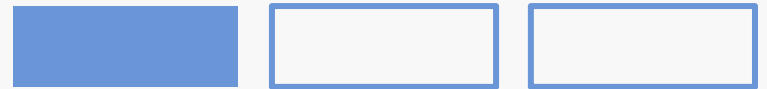


Visitors find the site **confusing**.

7x less daily visits than industry standard

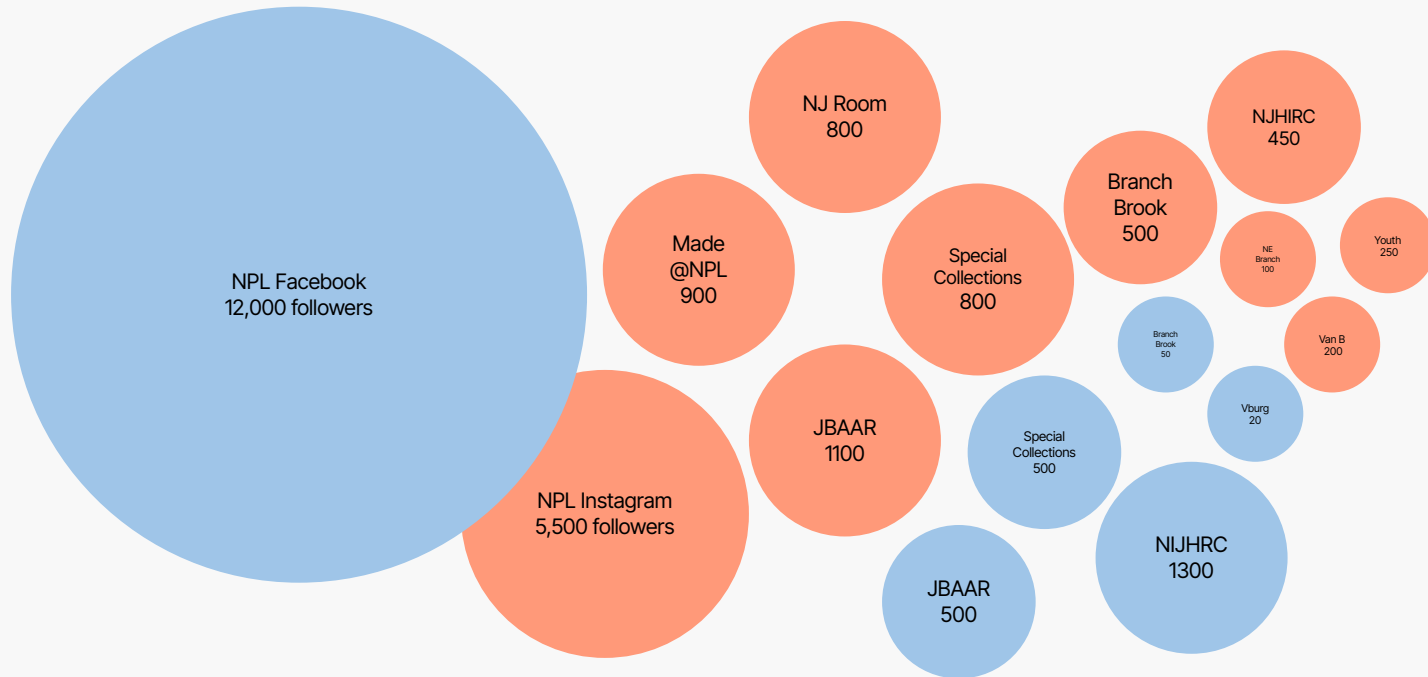


3x shorter site visits than industry standard



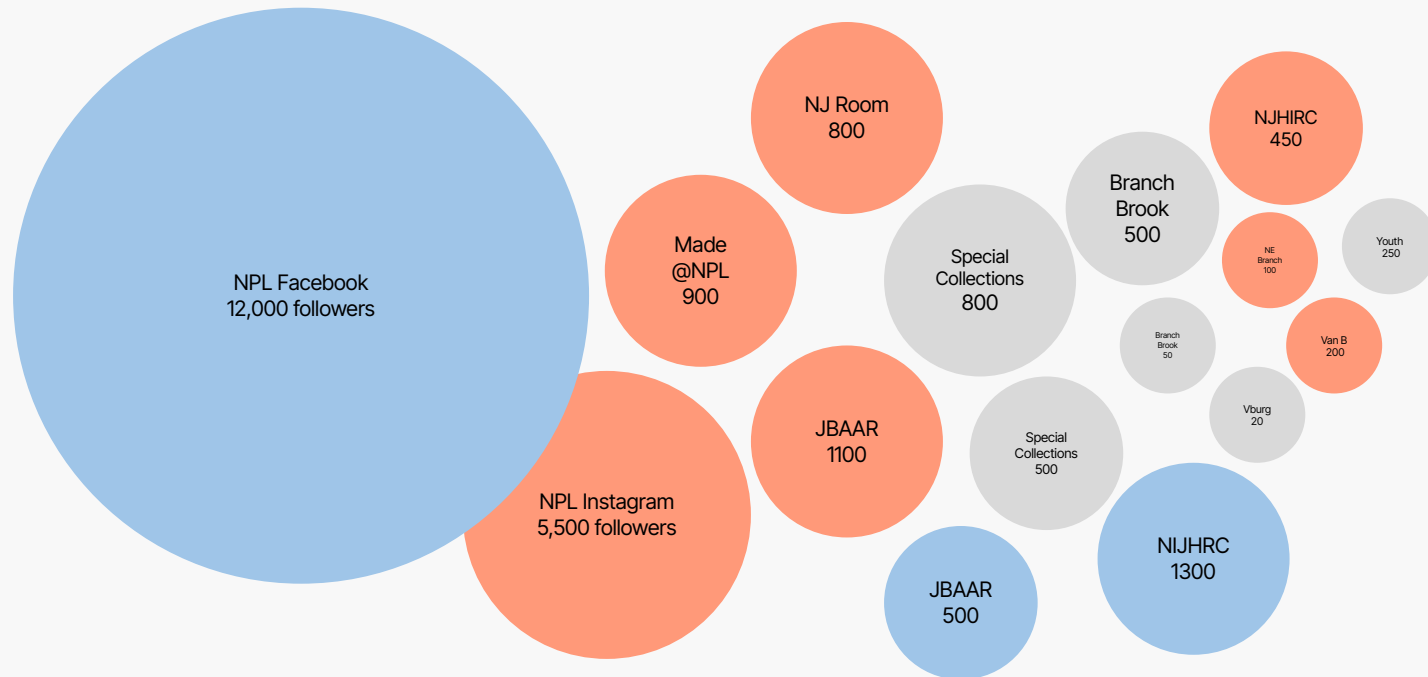
Library Promotion

Social Media



Library Promotion

Social Media



Library Promotion:

Considerations for Strategic Planning



INSIGHT

Inconsistent, disjointed promotion leads to low community awareness




Over-promotion of main branch activities exacerbates awareness gap

RECOMMENDATION

Develop a transparent communications strategy supported by staff training and technical support

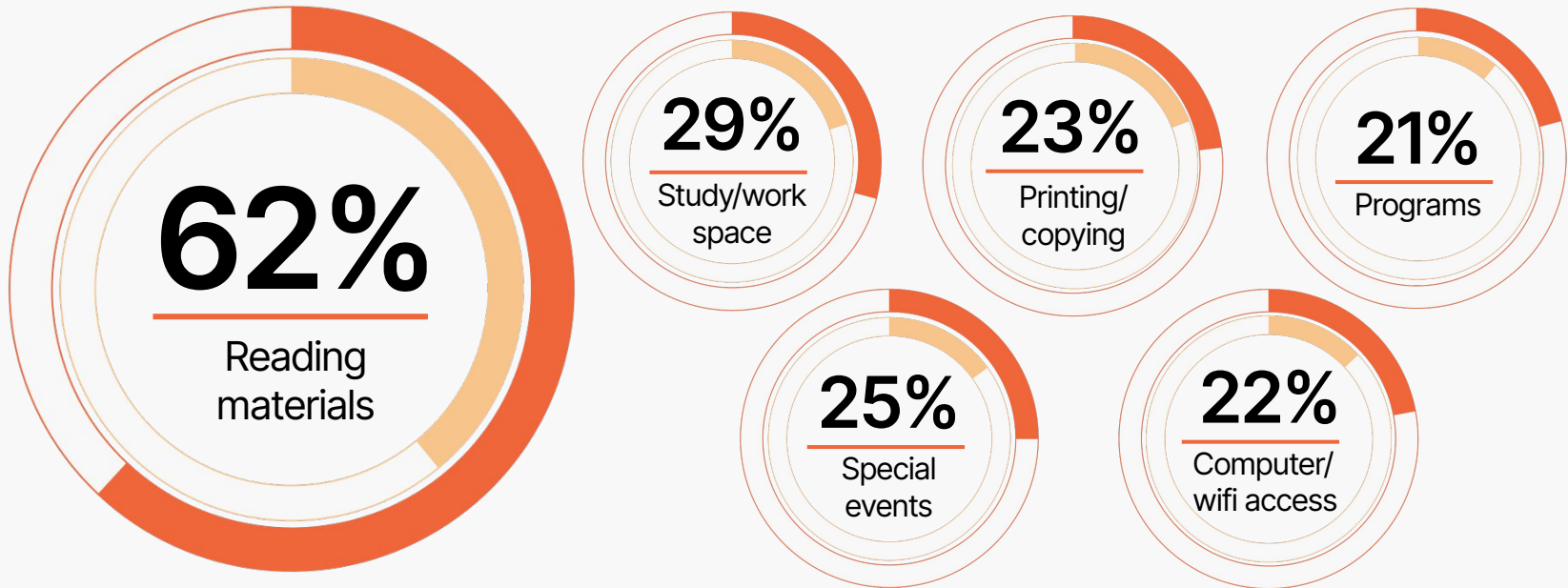
Utilize data-driven decision-making practices


Library Offerings

-  Collections and Services
-  Physical Spaces
-  Programming + Events



What do you use the library for?



 Frequent Users

 Infrequent Users

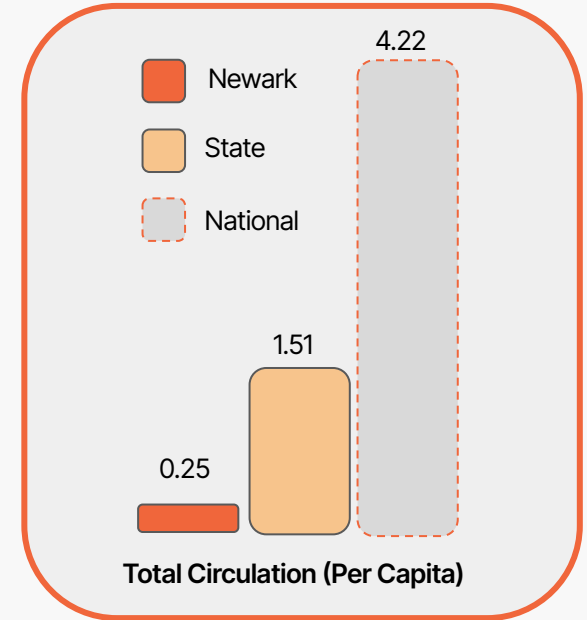
Library Offerings



17%

Of survey respondents would go to the library more often if there was a better selection of books to borrow.

* However, maintaining collections is difficult due to **lack of processes or procedures.**



Overall circulation remains low.

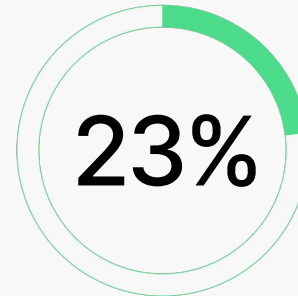
Library Offerings Services



NPL can be envisioned as a social service hub providing valuable services for Newark residents.

- Ability to connect people to local resources
- Services could include:
 - On-site social worker
 - **Makerspace:** innovative offerings for entrepreneurial/artistic needs like recording and podcast studios, Cricut machines, 3D printers.

How do services meet community needs?



of respondents would visit more if the library had more information about community events / resources.

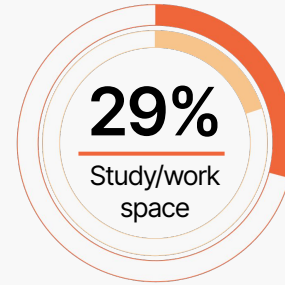
Library Offerings

Physical Spaces



Nearly 22% of survey respondents identify it as a 'safe space to spend time.'*

**but the condition of some facilities are a deterrent.*



Quiet Spaces

are important to library patrons who rely on them for work and study.

*consider large **community room** or **meeting space** usage more broadly*

+ Physical spaces that accompany special collections are unique.



Library Offerings

Programming and Events



Nearly 20% of surveyed staff enjoy programming the most about their job and nearly 25% talk about programs and events when asked to describe the library's role in the community.

STAFF SAY

- They love the freedom to create programming (**autonomy**)
- NPL needs systems and processes so that they can run programming efficiently, aligned with library goals (**align with community needs**)



NPL
13th in number of programs offered compared to 30 similar libraries in New Jersey.

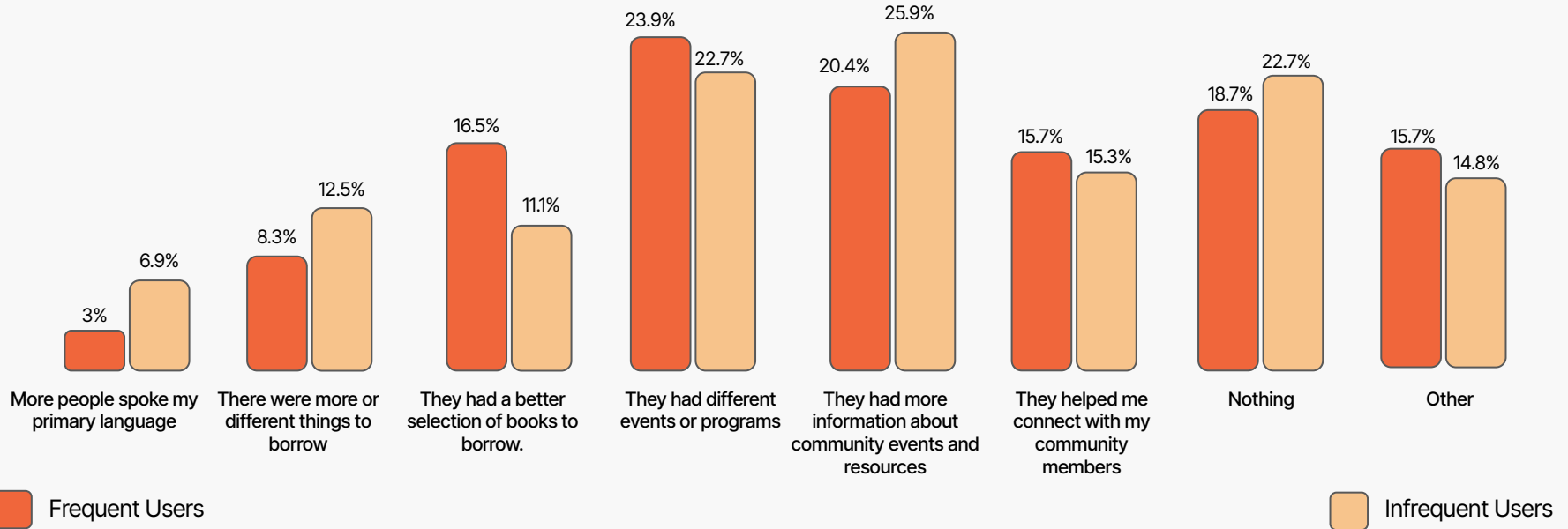


NPL
20th in programs attendance compared to 30 similar libraries in New Jersey.

Library Offerings



I would go to the library more often if...





Do NPL offerings

- meet community needs?
- address barriers to access?

For example

50%

Do not speak English as a primary language.

Programs primarily in English.

Promotions center English language.

Collections center English language.



Library Offerings

Considerations for Strategic Planning

INSIGHT

It's not about doing more – just aligning offerings to community interests and needs

RECOMMENDATION

Implement data-driven processes

Develop a regularly-updated system for tracking and documentation

Utilize community partners as collaborators and promoters



Policies, Processes, and Procedures

Today at NPL



Policy Auditing Tool



To ensure policies are

ACCESSIBLE

COMPLETE & CURRENT

COMBINED WITH PROCESSES

Policies to Consider	Does it exist?	Is it accessible?	Is it complete and current?	Do relevant processes and procedures exist?	Exemplars
Library Access & Borrowing Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jacksonville Public Library
Technology & Internet Use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>NOTE: note multiple sections</i>
Meeting Room / Facility Use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lafayette Public Library
Privacy & Confidentiality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DC Public Library
Accessibility & ADA					

Policy Audit Tool Preview



Policies, processes, procedures

Considerations for Strategic Planning

INSIGHT

Without clear and structured policies, library systems are inefficient and/or misaligned to community priorities and organizational goals.

RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen NPL's Policy Framework + Implementation:

- Comprehensive policy audit: identify gaps, update policies to align with library goals, establish clear + standard procedures
- Create a structured process for policy development and implementation



Strategic Plan

Next steps



2021-2023 Strategy

Newark Public Library
Bridge Plan

2021-2023

- ✱ Ambiguous terminology
- ✱ 30+ goals for year 1 (ineffectively communicated)
- ✱ Lack of process for monitoring progress/evaluating success
- ✱ Inconsistent follow through

What got in the way of execution?

A strategic plan is only as good as...

the **quality of the data** used
to inform priorities,

the **alignment** of its goals
to the larger
organizational vision,

the **mechanisms** for
follow through for
implementation.

The NPL strategic plan must include:

1. A unified definition of success.
2. Clear goals and performance indicators.
3. Transparent evaluation and accountability.

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- Based on existing vision:
 - What does it mean / look like to be a “national model of innovation, collaboration, and service excellence”?
 - What should NPL look like in 2025 and beyond?
 - What does it mean / look like to “strengthen communities”?
- Based on data collected:
 - What does it mean to be a community hub?
 - What is the role of the Main library; what is the role of branch libraries?
 - How does the collective NPL system want to be seen; how are individual branches meant to be seen?

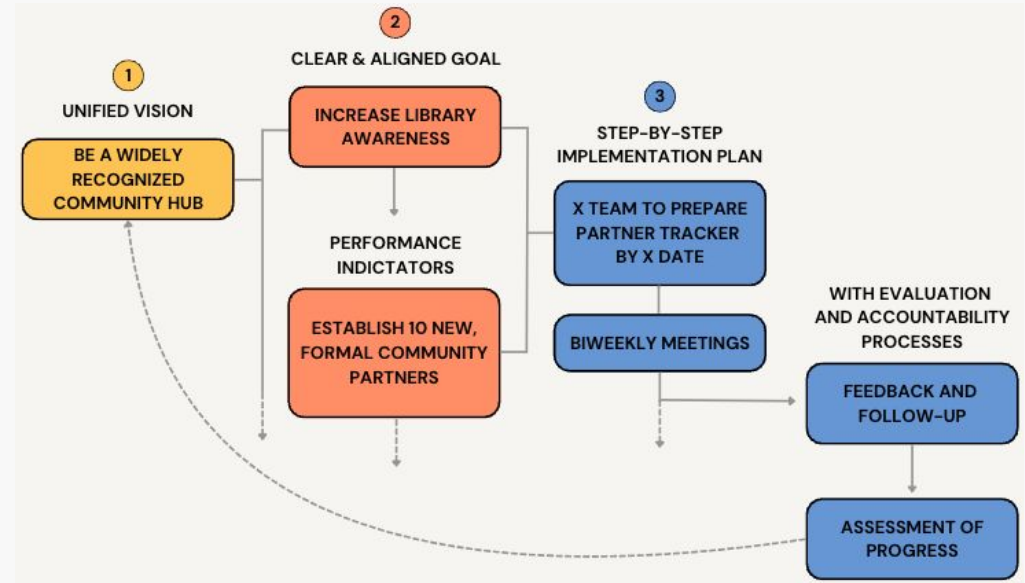
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Data suggests goals should focus on...	Therefore, performance indicators could address...
Refining outreach efforts	Utilizing intentional promotional strategies to amplify NPL offerings
	Assessing / adapting partnerships to increase library reach
Improving ongoing library data collection and analysis	Creating and using structures for transparent collection and analysis of data at the system-level and disaggregating by branch
Implementing systems across branches	Creating/implementing policies and processes that guide decision-making for programming, partnerships, promotion, etc

The NPL strategic plan must include

1. A unified definition of success
2. Clear goals and performance indicators
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Next Steps

