Public Library Mobile App Survey

January 2018

Conducted by: **LIBRARY**JOURNAL. RESEARCH

Sponsored by: SirsiDynix®

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Study Objectives:

SirsiDynix teamed up with *Library Journal* research to create a survey for public libraries about mobile apps.

Objectives of the study were to learn:
- Percentage of libraries with mobile apps.
- App features that are most important to libraries
- Functionality libraries wish their app had.
- How libraries market their app.
- Vendors used for apps.
- If libraries do not have an app, why not?

Methodology:

An *LJ* branded survey invitation was emailed to a list of public librarians on December 8, 2017. A drawing for a $100 American Express gift cards was offered as incentive to reply. The survey closed on January 3, 2018. The survey was programmed, deployed and tabulated by *Library Journal* Research.

Results in this top-line report are based on 618 public libraries. Duplicate responses from the same library were removed from the sample. Charts in this report are based on total responding unless otherwise noted. (Reduced bases are noted in the upper right hand corner of the page.) The data is unweighted.

Much of the data in this report is filtered by library size. The sizes are based on population served:
- Small libraries serve populations under 25,000.
- Medium sized libraries serve populations between 25,000 and 99,999.
- Large libraries serve populations between 100,000 and 499,999.
- Very large libraries serve 500,000 or more.

Results Summary

Mobile Apps and Mobile-Optimized Websites

- Just over a third of all respondents have a mobile app (37%). The percentage rises with size of library and ranges from 22% of the smallest libraries to 69% of the largest.
- The overall percentage of public libraries with a mobile-optimized website is 72%. The percentage range is smaller, with 65% of small to 77% of large libraries employing mobile optimization.

Why Not Have App? (based on libraries without an app)

- The availability of a mobile-optimized website is the primary reason given by libraries for not developing a mobile app. Lack of funding and the availability of individual vendor apps for select resources also play a role.

Considering an App? (based on libraries without an app)

- Only 9% of libraries without a mobile app are considering purchasing or developing one. For those who plan to develop an app, ten percent already have one in development, and another 27% expect an app in the next year.

Important App Functions (based on libraries without an app)

- If they were to develop an app, the functionality that is most important includes access to the catalog, library calendar/events listing, ebook & eaudio checkouts, text notifications, and mobile library card/digital barcode. All of these functions were rated as 'essential' or 'important' by over 80% of respondents.

Vendor Apps (based on libraries without an app)

- OverDrive/Libby tops the list of vendor apps that are marketed directly to patrons by libraries without their own app. RBdigital, hoopla, Mango Languages, and Zinio round out the top five vendor apps marketed by libraries.

App Functionality Offered (based on libraries with a mobile app)

- Providing access to the library catalog is a nearly universal app function, offered by almost all respondents, regardless of library size. Library calendar/events listing, ebook & eaudio checkouts, and mobile library card/digital barcode are available on about two-thirds of libraries' apps, except those used by the smallest libraries.

App Functionality Desired (based on libraries with a mobile app)

- Additional app functionality most desired by libraries is fine payment, the inclusion of a library calendar/events listing, ebook/eaudio checkout capability, and mobile library cards/electronic barcodes.

Results Summary continued

- The list below compares the essential/important functions named by libraries without an app to the app functions currently offered and additional functionality desired by libraries with an app.
- Fine payment, text notifications, and remote sign up emerge as functions that are currently not offered by most apps, but are highly desired.

	Essential/Important App Functions	App Functionality Offered	Add'l Functionality Desired
	(Libraries without app)	(Libraries with mobile app)	
Access to catalog	96%	97%	0%
Library calendar/events	98%	68%	62%
Ebook/Eaudio checkouts	89%	60%	56%
Mobile library card/ Digital barcode	84%	60%	55%
Integration with other electronic resources	73%	47%	47%
Social media integration	70%	39%	39%
Text notifications	88%	28%	51%
Remote sign up for events/card	77%	27%	51%
Fine payment	77%	26%	69%

Satisfaction with Integration of App and ILS (based on libraries with a mobile app)
- Over half of respondents are either very satisfied (16%) or satisfied (43%) with the integration of their app with their ILS. A net 12% are either not too or not at all satisfied. Satisfaction is highest among library directors/managers and lowest among technical services personnel.

Marketing the App (based on libraries with a mobile app)
- The top three methods of informing patrons about the library app are through the library website, social media, and word of mouth by library staff

Results Summary continued

App Usage (based on libraries with a mobile app)
- Respondents estimate that 12% of their library users have downloaded the app to their device(s).
- About one-third (38%) of respondents say their app appeals to specific library customers. The user segments identified as most likely to download the app are parents, younger adults, students, tech savvy users, and power users.

Mobile App Vendor (based on libraries with an app)
- Boopsie is the most commonly used app vendor , with SirsiDynix and Bibliocommons rounding out the top three.

Mobile App Spending (based on libraries with an app)
- The average amount spent on a library app last year was approximately $6,500. However, nearly half of respondents spent less than $5,000.

Consortial Apps and Branding (based on libraries with an app)
- One-in-five libraries with an app accesses it through a consortium. Small libraries are most likely to have their app made possible through a consortium.
- Of those with consortial access, 60% have their app individually branded, If the app is not branded, over half would like it to be.

Usage Analytics (based on libraries with an app)
- Forty percent of respondents say they receive usage statistics from their app vendor. A high percentage, 44%, were unaware of the answer

Library Apps and Mobile-Optimized Websites

Q. Does your library currently have an app?
Q. Is your library's website mobile-optimized?

- Just over one-third of all respondents have a mobile app (37%). The number rises with the size of the population served, from 22% of the smallest libraries to 69% of the largest.

- Mobile-optimized websites are more prevalent, with up to three-quarters of libraries having them.
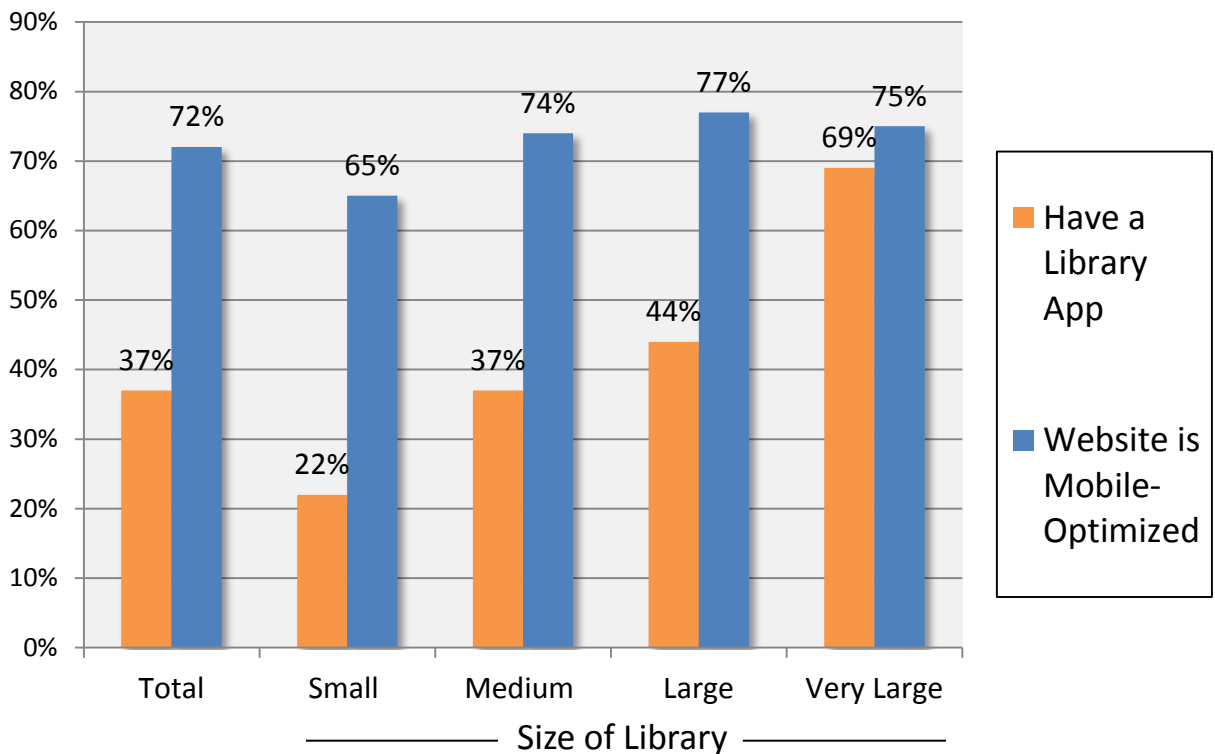
Reasons for Not Having a Mobile App

Q. What is the primary reason your library does not have its own app?

- The availability of a mobile-optimized website is the most popular reason libraries without an app do not develop one. Lack of funding and the availability of vendor apps for select resources (such as OverDrive or hoopla) also play a role. One-in-five small libraries cites lack of demand from patrons as a reason.
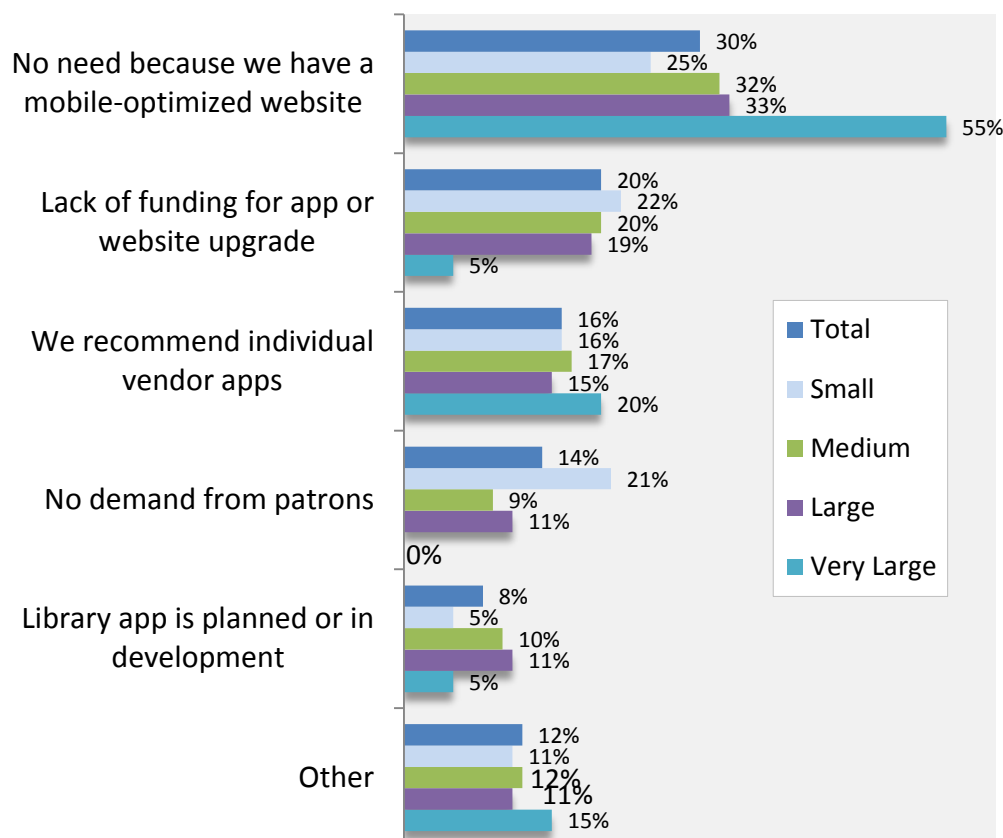
- For libraries that report having a mobile-optimized website, the percentage naming website optimization as a reason climbs to 43%.

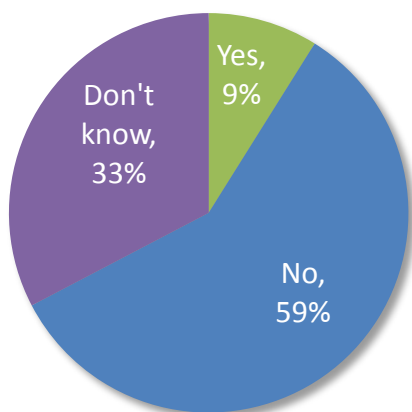| Reason	Total	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large
No need because we have a mobile-optimized website	30%	25%	32%	33%	55%
Lack of funding for app or website upgrade	20%	22%	20%	19%	5%
We recommend individual vendor apps	16%	16%	17%	15%	20%
No demand from patrons	14%	21%	9%	11%	0%
Library app is planned or in development	8%	5%	10%	11%	5%
Other	12%	11%	12%	11%	15%

Considering a Mobile Library App

Q. Is your library considering buying or developing a mobile app?

- Only 9% of libraries without a mobile app are considering purchasing or developing one. The 'Yes' percentage rises to 13% among library directors answering the survey, and presumably they have the best understanding of the long range plans for the library.

- For those who plan to develop an app, ten percent already have one in development, and another 27% expect it in the next year.

Considering an app?

Yes, 9%
Don't know, 33%
No, 59%

If yes, when will you have app?

Currently in development	10%
In the next year	27%
In the next two years	34%
Longer than 2 years	8%
Don't know	21%
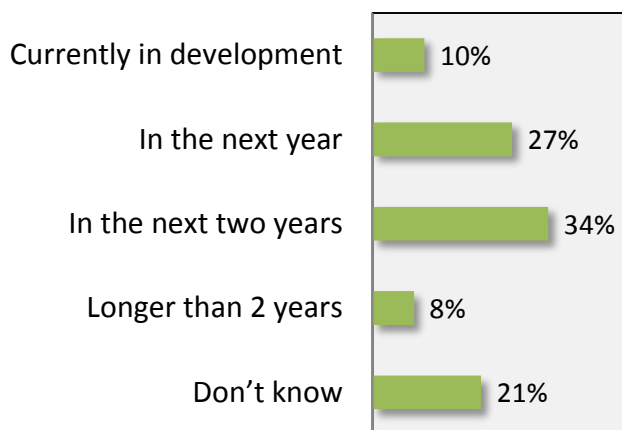
Considering developing an App?	Size of Library				Job Function		
	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	Directors/ Managers	Public Services	Technical services
Yes	8%	11%	8%	5%	13%	6%	4%
No	67%	50%	58%	42%	70%	39%	66%
Don't know	24%	39%	34%	53%	17%	55%	30%

Importance of App functions

Q. How important would each of the following app functions be to your library?

- The functionality that is most important to libraries when developing a mobile app includes library calendar/events listing, access to catalog, ebook/eaudio checkouts, and text notifications. Access to the catalog has the highest 'essential' ratings.

- Streaming music/movies, patron ratings/reviews, librarian chat, and mapping are nice to have, but fall at the bottom of the list of app requirements.

NET %
Essential/Important

Function	NET %
Library calendar/events	98.2%
Access to catalog	96.4%
Ebook/Eaudio checlouts	89.3%
Text notifications	87.5%
Mobile library card/digital barcode	83.9%
Remote sign up for events/card	76.8%
Fine payment	76.8%
Integration with electronic resources	73.2%
Social media integration	69.6%
Features for kids/teens	54.5%
Librarian chat	48.2%
Mapping	48.1%
Streaming music/movies	42.9%
Patrons ratings and reviews	33.9%

■ Essential
■ Important

Vendor Apps

Q. If you don't have your own app, do you encourage patrons to try any of
the following vendor apps?

- OverDrive/Libby tops the list of vendor apps that are marketed directly to
  patrons by libraries without their own app. RBdigital is in second place,
  named by over half of respondents. Hoopla, Mango Languages, and Zinio
  are all promoted by over a third of respondents.

Vendor App	Percentage
OverDrive/Libby	86%
RBdigital	51%
hoopla	39%
Mango Languages	37%
Zinio	35%
Freegal	22%
cloudLibrary	12%
Axis 360	10%
Freading	8%
Biblioboard	7%
Comics Plus	3%
SimplyE	2%
Other*	15%
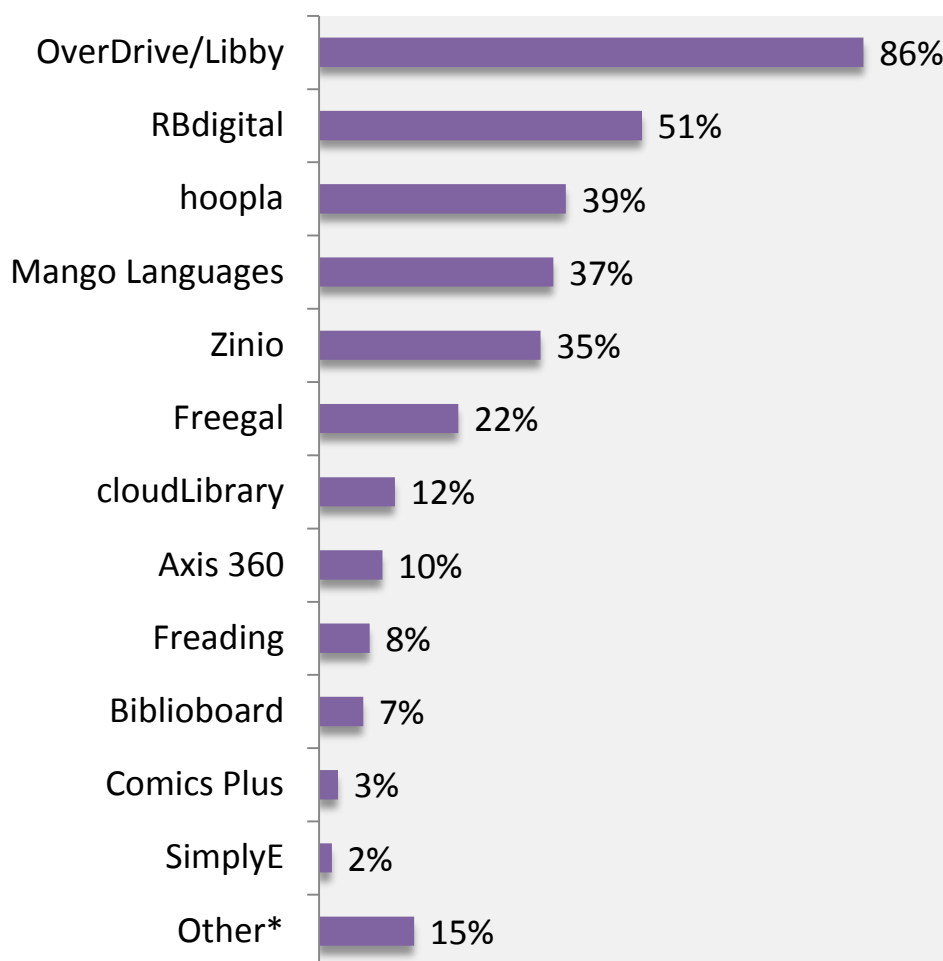
* Write-in answers featured Bookmyne, Flipster, Rosetta Stone, & Pronunciator.

App Functionality

Q. What types of functionality does your app currently offer?

- Providing access to the library catalog is a nearly universal app function (97%), no matter the library size. Library calendar/event listings, ebook/eaudio checkouts, and mobile library cards/digital barcodes are available on about two-thirds of libraries' apps (except those used by the smallest libraries).

- At the very largest libraries, offering a mobile library card with a digital barcode is an extremely common function, second only to access to catalog.
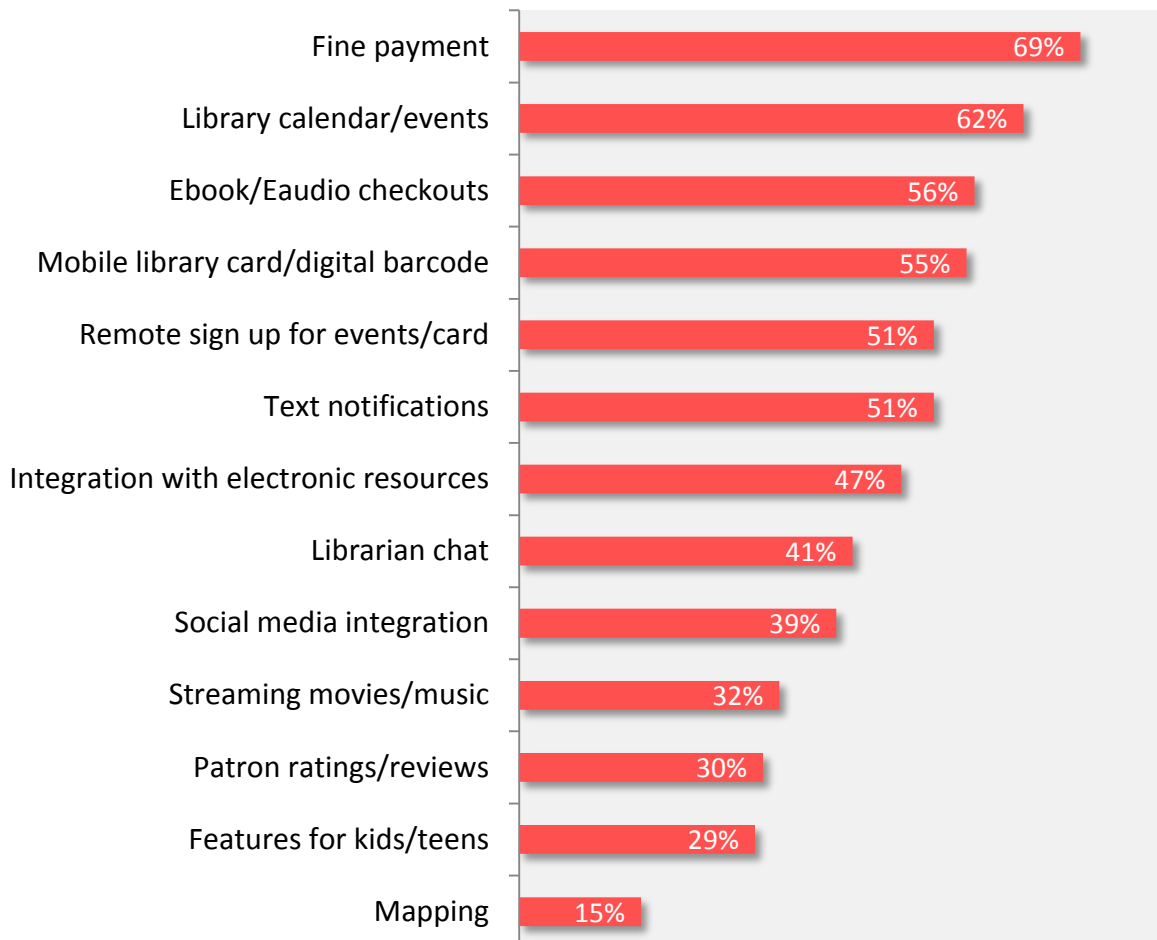
	Total	Library Size			
		Small	Medium	Large	Very Large
Access to catalog	97%	95%	97%	98%	97%
Library calendar/events	68%	63%	78%	66%	60%
Ebook/Eaudio checkouts	60%	45%	66%	61%	62%
Mobile library card/ Digital barcode	60%	35%	59%	63%	84%
Integration with other electronic resources	47%	38%	50%	52%	43%
Social media integration	39%	38%	35%	42%	43%
Text notifications	28%	28%	40%	23%	16%
Remote sign up for events or library card	27%	20%	32%	28%	24%
Mapping	26%	18%	22%	28%	41%
Fine payment	26%	18%	19%	33%	35%
Patron ratings/reviews	24%	15%	25%	30%	24%
Streaming movies/music	22%	20%	28%	17%	19%
Features for kids/teens	18%	10%	22%	17%	19%
Librarian chat	9%	3%	12%	11%	8%
Other	7%	5%	4%	13%	5%

Desired App Functions

Q. Do you wish your app had additional functionality? (Please check all that apply)

- Fine payment, the inclusion of a library calendar/events listing, ebook/eaudio checkout capability, and mobile library cards/electronic barcodes are the most desired app functions of those who do not currently have them.

Additional Functionality Desired*

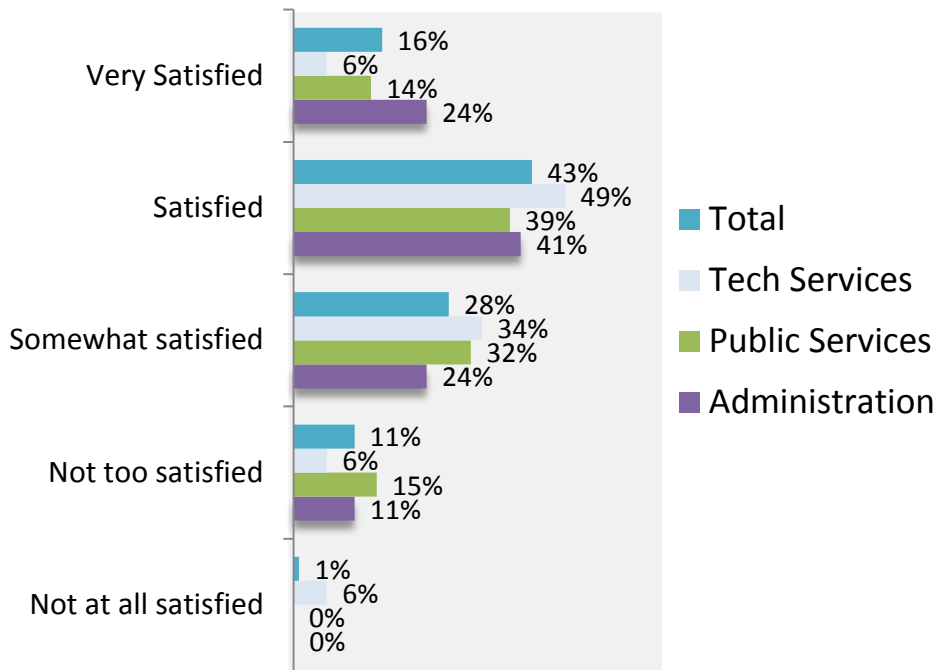| Function	Percent
Fine payment	69%
Library calendar/events	62%
Ebook/Eaudio checkouts	56%
Mobile library card/digital barcode	55%
Remote sign up for events/card	51%
Text notifications	51%
Integration with electronic resources	47%
Librarian chat	41%
Social media integration	39%
Streaming movies/music	32%
Patron ratings/reviews	30%
Features for kids/teens	29%
Mapping	15%

* Each response is based on those libraries that do not currently have the function.

Satisfaction with Integration of App and ILS

Q. How satisfied are you with the integration between your mobile app and your library management system (ILS)?
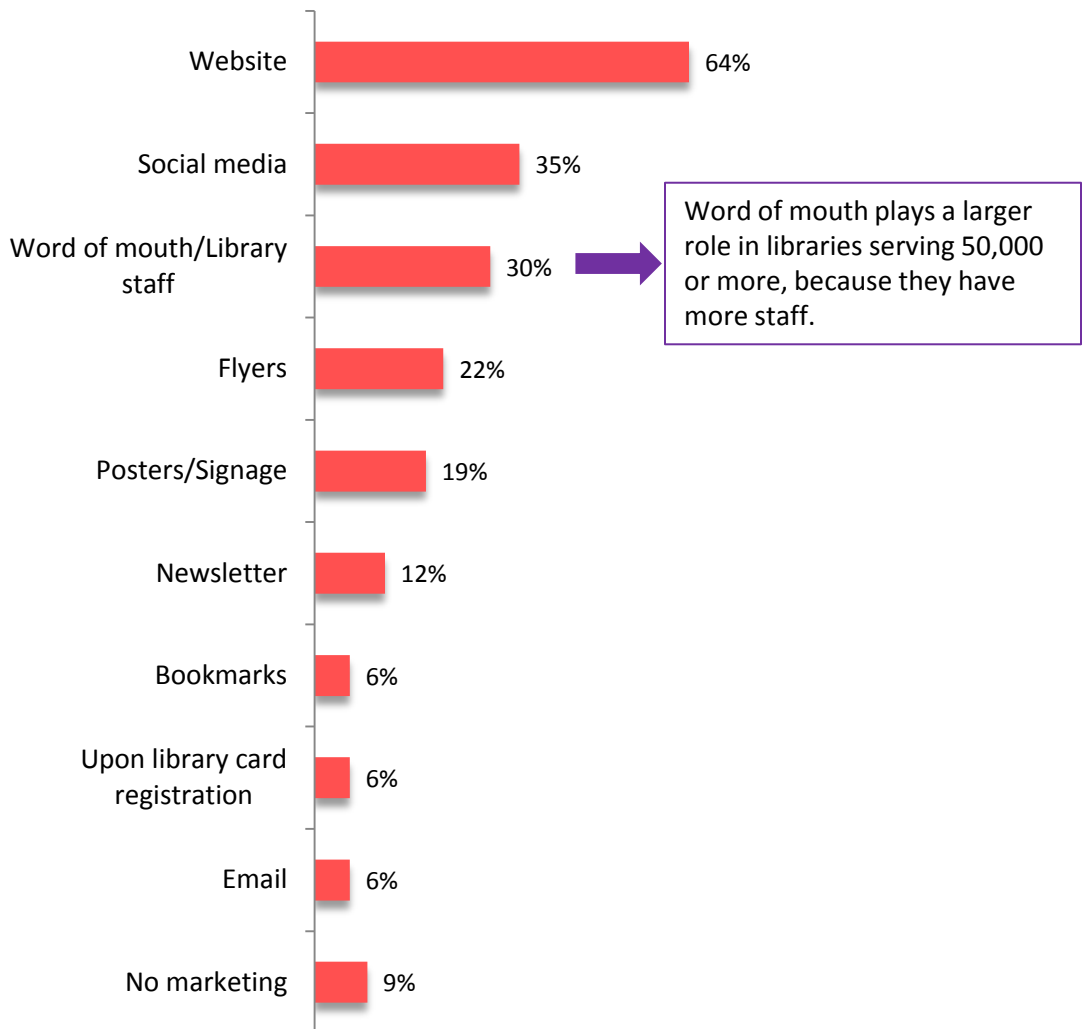
- Sixteen percent of all respondents are very satisfied with the integration between the mobile app and the library's management system. Satisfaction is highest among library directors/managers and lowest among technical services personnel.

Very Satisfied
- 16%
- 6%
- 14%
- 24%

Satisfied
- 43%
- 49%
- 39%
- 41%

Somewhat satisfied
- 28%
- 34%
- 32%
- 24%

Not too satisfied
- 11%
- 6%
- 15%
- 11%

Not at all satisfied
- 1%
- 6%
- 0%
- 0%

Legend:
- ■ Total
- ▫ Tech Services
- ■ Public Services
- ■ Administration

Marketing the App

Q. How do you market the availability of your app to patrons?*

- The top three methods of informing patrons about the library app are the library website, social media, and word of mouth by library staff.
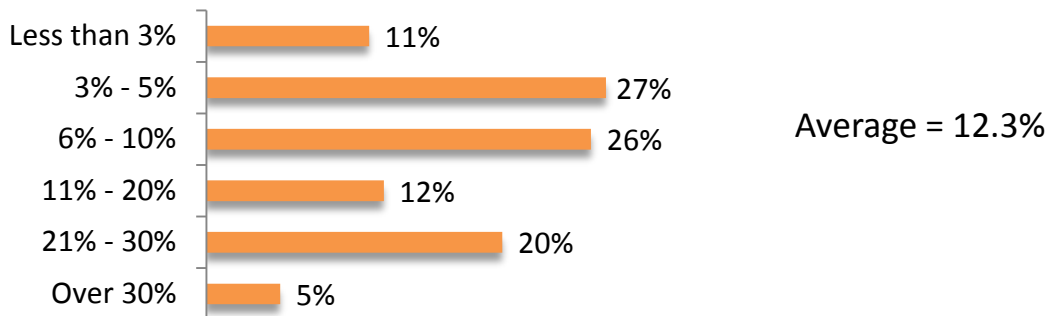
Method	Percentage
Website	64%
Social media	35%
Word of mouth/Library staff	30%
Flyers	22%
Posters/Signage	19%
Newsletter	12%
Bookmarks	6%
Upon library card registration	6%
Email	6%
No marketing	9%

Word of mouth plays a larger role in libraries serving 50,000 or more, because they have more staff.

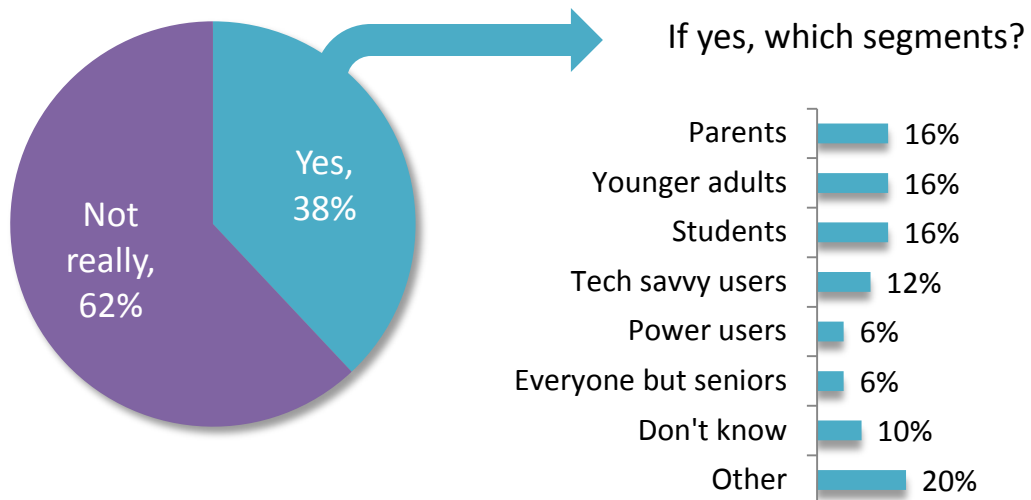* These percentages were coded from responses to an open-ended question.

App Usage

- Respondents estimate that an average of 12% of their library users have downloaded the app to their device(s). About one-third of respondents say their app appeals to specific library customers. The user segments identified as most likely to download the app are parents, younger adults, students, tech savvy users, and power users.

Q. Approximately what percent of library users has downloaded the app to a device since your app became available?

Category	Percent
Less than 3%	11%
3% - 5%	27%
6% - 10%	26%
11% - 20%	12%
21% - 30%	20%
Over 30%	5%

Average = 12.3%

Q. Is the app especially popular with specific segment(s) of your users?

Not really, 62%

Yes, 38%

If yes, which segments?

Segment	Percent
Parents	16%
Younger adults	16%
Students	16%
Tech savvy users	12%
Power users	6%
Everyone but seniors	6%
Don't know	10%
Other	20%

Mobile App Spending

Q. Approximately what was your library's spending on its mobile app last year?*

- The average app spending last year was $6,465. However, nearly half of respondents spent less than $5,000 last year.

	Total	Library Size			
		Small**	Medium**	Large**	Very Large**
Average	$6,465	$3,770	$4,841	$8,276	$12,000
Median $	$4,910	$3,437	$4,166	$7,083	$15,833

* Based on respondents who were involved in the development and purchasing process of their app.

Mobile App Vendor Used

Q. What vendor do you use for your app?

- Among our respondents, Boopsie is the most commonly used app vendor. SirsiDynix and Bibliocommons round out the top three.
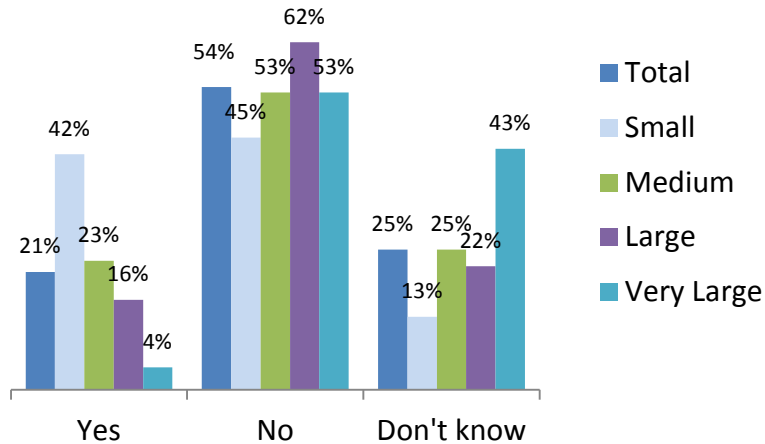
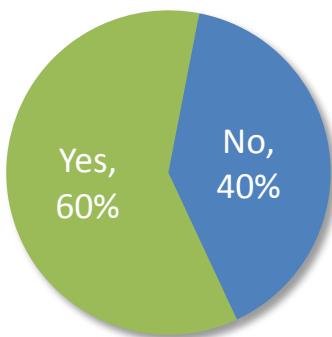|	Total	Library Size			
		Small**	Medium	Large	Very Large**
Boopsie	32%	32%	32%	35%	29%
SirsiDynix	18%	14%	25%	16%	11%
Bibliocommons	12%	4%	5%	16%	25%
Capira	4%	7%	4%	4%	0%
Developed in-house	3%	4%	2%	6%	0%
Innovative Interfaces	2%	4%	0%	2%	4%
TLC	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Other	13%	18%	14%	7%	14%
Don't know	17%	18%	19%	13%	18%

** Small base size

Consortial Access and Branding

Q. Is your library's app made available through a consortium?

- One-in-five libraries with an app accesses it through a consortium. Small libraries are most likely to have their app made possible through a consortium.

Legend:
- Total
- Small
- Medium
- Large
- Very Large

Yes: Total 21%, Small 42%, Medium 23%, Large 16%, Very Large 4%

No: Total 54%, Small 45%, Medium 53%, Large 62%, Very Large 53%

Don't know: Total 25%, Small 13%, Medium 25%, Large 22%, Very Large 43%

Q. If yes above, is the app individually branded for your library?

Yes, 60%
No, 40%

Q. If not branded, would you prefer to have your app be branded?*

Yes, 57%
No, 43%
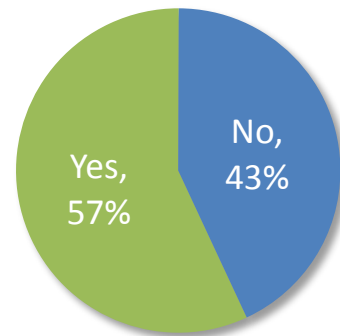
*small base

Usage Analytics

Q. Do you receive usage analytics from your app provider (e.g., number of connections to the catalog, number of ebook checkouts, etc.)?

- Forty percent of respondents say they receive usage statistics from their app vendor. Fifteen percent do not, and 44% did not know the answer to the question. Technical services staff were most likely to report receiving usage statistics.

- 40% Yes
- 15% No
- 44% Don't know
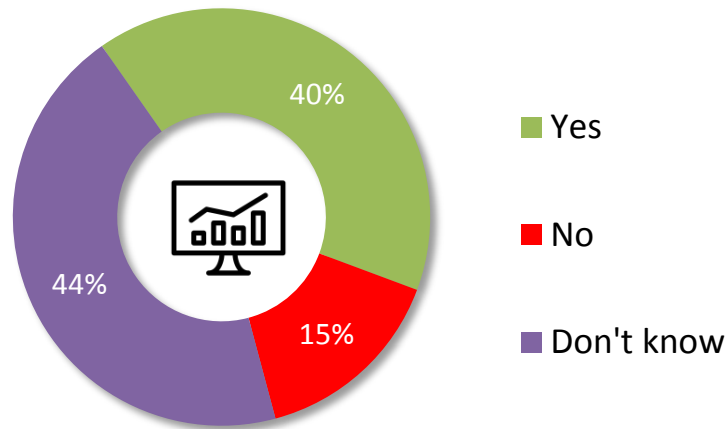
Receive Usage Statistics?	Size of Library				Job Function		
	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	Directors/ Managers	Public Services	Technical services
Yes	30%	42%	48%	32%	33%	28%	65%
No	20%	19%	11%	11%	27%	3%	23%
Don't know	50%	39%	41%	57%	40%	69%	13%

Challenges

Q. What are your challenges when putting mobile solutions to work in your library? Open-ended question.

If have a library app:

"Integrations with our preferred content providers rather than those the app provider works with."

"Getting the word out and getting patrons to sign up/use them."

"Staff availability to train patrons, troubleshooting on everyone's different devices."

"Whether to utilize stand-alone apps. or to optimize responsive design for our sites."

"Mobile internet isn't available for many people, tech-savvy-ness is lacking in the general population."

If no library app:

"Maintaining both the website and the app would be very time consuming. "

"Lack of know-how from the staff regarding app design and implementation."

"Lack of staffing and funding to advance."

"Educating the public and marketing."
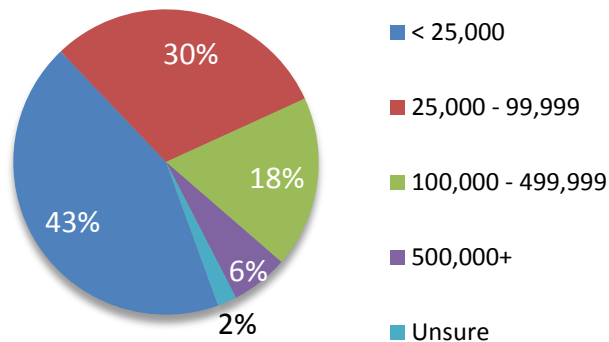
"Lack of funding and no request by our patrons."

"Different platforms, particularly for e-resources, aren't integrated with one another."

Respondent demographics

Q. What is your job function?

Category	Percentage
Predicting patron demand	60%
Community outreach	48%
Budget accountability	43%
Custom collections for changing comm.	39%
Readers' advisory services	25%
Organizing library events	20%
Ordering books in advance of pub.	17%
Best practices/Peer ideas & activities	12%
Spending grant $ on particular themes	6%
Creating thematic displays	6%
Other	7%

Q. What is the total population served by your library?

- < 25,000 — 43%
- 25,000 - 99,999 — 30%
- 100,000 - 499,999 — 18%
- 500,000+ — 6%
- Unsure — 2%

Average population served = 119,900
Median population served = 39,600

Q. How involved were you in the development and purchasing
process for your library's mobile app?

- One third of the respondents to this survey were directly involved in the
development or purchasing process of the mobile app for their library.

17% ■ I signed off

18% ■ I made
recommendations

64% ■ I was not involved