Library Resource Needs Assessment

Findings from a State-wide assessment of database and resource needs conducted with Library Professionals and Utah’s residents.

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Executive Summary

Utah’s library professionals are assessing future investments in online information databases and resources made available through libraries across the state. The intended result is recommendations for information resources based on key categories—which must serve a diverse user base in the broader community, from city and county libraries, to K-12- and university-based organizations.

A needs assessment was commissioned to document current and projected use of information resources and supports. Results should inform deliberations and recommendations based on data—which, together, contribute to decisions that maximize the state’s return on database and resource investments and serve patrons.

Two population-specific surveys provided the required data:

- Survey of Library Professionals, with a total of 317 individual responses, representing 26 of 29 counties across the state.
- General Public Survey, with 461 respondents, representing 22 of 29 counties across the state.

Five Key Findings

1. Speaking broadly, the currently provided databases and resources are confirmed by library professionals and responding members of the general public as the kinds people want and need.

2. On average, library professionals projected the future need for each type of database/resource as being slightly higher than the current level of use.

3. The current usage levels and future needs differ between City and County libraries, and those indicated by K-12 and University respondents. Yet, the differences between current and a slightly higher future need typically varied similarly.

4. While over 70% of the general public survey respondents possessed a post-secondary degree, the level of need for resources rarely differed based on education level.

5. Access to the digital library was by and far the most used and expressed as necessary resource, with consensus from library professionals and general public respondents.
Needs Assessment Overview.

The state of Utah is engaged in the exciting process of assessing its future investments in online information databases and resources made available through libraries across the state. A representative team of library stakeholders is pursuing a process that leads to recommendations for database subscriptions. This includes both individual resources and packaged solutions that must serve a diverse user base in the broader community, alongside K-12- and university-based personnel.

To complement the already present perspectives, the team sought to give voice to the larger community regarding their use of and need for library-provided resources. Responsive to that intent, this needs assessment documented current and projected use of information resources and supports. The insights can inform deliberations and data-based recommendations, which, together, contribute to decisions that maximize the state's return on database and resource investments, and best serve patrons statewide.
Survey
Demographics.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Two needs assessment survey tools were used to collect data: The first was targeted to library professionals statewide, and the second was targeted to Utahns who use the resources (patrons, general public). In this section, we describe the individuals who responded to the survey invitation.

An opportunistic sampling strategy was used to collect survey data from both audiences. While the recorded responses may, or may not, fully reflect each audience’s full population, actions were taken to increase the representation of populations across the state.

This included surveying two unique populations for their unique perspectives. Additional strategies involved stratifying respondents based on job, age, gender, and other key demographics. In addition, the final sample largely represents the state’s boundaries with library professional responses from 26 or 29 (90%) counties and general public responses from 22 of 29 (76%) counties.
Library Professionals.

People working in libraries throughout the state served as the first audience for the needs assessment effort.

A total of 317 individuals, representing 26 of 29 counties, provided usable data. These respondents represented five different library types and across the distribution in the adjacent figure. The data analysis includes investigation of needs based on library type, to uncover differences where they exist.
The 317 library professionals, from 26 of 29 counties, also represented a diverse range of library positions. Public Librarians were just under one-half of the final sample. Various types of K-12 School Librarians were also strongly represented in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Librarian</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library Manager</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Librarian</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Library Manager</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database Manager</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems Manager/Analyst</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 School Librarian Elementary Level</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 School Librarian Middle School Level</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 School Librarian High School Level</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 School Librarian All Levels</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 District Library Supervisor/Director</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Library Professionals.

The responding Library Professionals were, on average, an experienced group. Almost one-half of respondents possessed 10+ years in their field, and 69.1% of respondents indicated 5 or more years of experience.
Utahns from across the state also responded to a targeted survey. Reached through in-library, online, and on-air calls to action, a total of 461 people responded to the survey. Together, they represented 22 of 29 counties across the state.

With regard to race, just under 90% of respondents identified as White. The second most selected answer, at 7.4%, was “Choose not to answer.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose not to answer</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many respondents, 80.1% indicated being married or in a domestic partnership. The second most frequently occurring marital status was single, which represented 14.0% of respondents.
Responding Utahns tended to be middle age with more than half of survey participants (55.8%) being between the ages of 35 and 54.

Older participants comprised 13.7% of the final sample, while younger participants (between 18 and 34) accounted for 30.5% of the final sample.

The data analysis includes investigation of needs, for resources and for supports in using resources, based on age to uncover differences where they exist.
General Public.

The analyzed sample varied in terms of education level. Speaking broadly, the responding sample could be considered highly educated. All but 21.2% of respondents possessed at least a Bachelor’s degree; 86.8% of the final sample possessed an Associate degree or higher.

Like participant age, the data analysis includes investigation of needs—for resources and for supports in using resources—based on educational level, to uncover differences where they exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree (e.g. BA, BS)</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose not to answer</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Queries.

Database/Resource Categories

Eleven (11) categories of library databases and resources were used to frame the needs assessment inquiry. Respondents—both professional and general public—used these categories to answer a range of questions that included current need, current use, and future anticipated use.
# Database/Resource Categories and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Investment research, small business reference databases, marketing resources, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Careers/Test Prep</td>
<td>Courses to prepare users to take college entrance exams, career licensure certification exams, create resumes, write cover letters, find job postings, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Digital Library</td>
<td>Ebooks, audiobooks, electronic magazines, domestic and international newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Early Learning</td>
<td>Pre-K resources for basic numbers, alphabet, early reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learning</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learning: Resources to help users learn a new language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Genealogy/Family History Resources</td>
<td>Family tree type platforms for storing family history data and doing genealogical research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Health Resources and Databases</td>
<td>Medical journals/databases, Medline, prescription drug information, health insurance resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>History, Biographies, Cultures, Current Events</td>
<td>Resources to help users study history, culture, and current events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Homework Help</td>
<td>K-12 courses in history, math, science, and language arts courses, tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Online Learning How-To</td>
<td>Databases and video tutorials to help individuals gain a new skill like auto repair, arts and crafts, playing an instrument, computer skills, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>Databases and resources related to advances and research in mathematics, computer and information sciences, physical and chemical sciences, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An analysis of both survey datasets—library professionals and the general public—offers insights into needs.

The following pages highlight key findings from the preliminary analysis. They are intended to inform near-term discussions regarding additional analyses and enhancements to this initial reporting.
Guidance: Interpreting Results on Scales—Mean

Before viewing the results, here is some helpful guidance for understanding the ratings that follow.

Most survey items were rated on five-point scales. The average response (the mean) for a given item was calculated, based on values assigned to each point on the scale.

Consider the following scale that might be used to rate level of agreement. An average of 4.2 would suggest the respondents, on average, rated the given statement just above Agree.
Guidance: Interpreting Results on Scales—Standard Deviation

In addition to a mean or average, the standard deviation was calculated. Standard deviation helps describe how much agreement there is across ratings.

Consider the following two examples that use standard deviation to describe the distribution of results (each dot represents a survey response).

All Responses Cluster around “Agree,” suggesting consensus in ratings = Low Standard Deviation

Responses across broad range, suggesting lack of consensus in ratings = High Standard Deviation
Guidance: Interpreting Results on Scales—Applying Mean and Standard Deviation

The results that follow make use of both mean and standard deviation to describe survey responses.

Mean, or average, ratings are depicted as points on the y-axis-represented five-point scale—here from a low of 1=Little or No Use, to a high of 5=Highest Use.

Standard deviation estimates are shown as error bars. Longer lines indicate greater standard deviation and therefore, more widely spread ratings (less consensus). Shorter lines indicate the opposite.
Weighting was used to address varying sample sizes across key demographics. When applied, a weighted, sample has been adjusted to equally represent the demographic variable of interest—regardless of the number of survey responses received.

For example, when Library Type is unweighted, the full sample more heavily represents City (38%) and K-12 (32%) libraries. When results are weighted for Library Type, the depicted results use available responses to equally represent the five types of libraries. A similar weighting scheme was employed for General Public responses based on age.
Current Database and Resource Use.
Question: Thinking about your experiences with each database/resource area use across your workplace, what would you estimate the amount of use each of the following types of resources receives in your organization?
Question: Thinking about your experiences with each database/resource area use across your workplace, what would you estimate the amount of use each of the following types of resources receives in your organization?
Current Database and Resource Need.
Question: Please indicate your need for the described information by indicating: (1) your personal need—to be used outside of your employment (if employed), (2) your family need—select by answering for your entire family (skip if single), (3) your professional need—select based on employment-based needs (skip if retired or not seeking work).
General Public Personal Need Estimates by Age

Question: Please indicate your need for the described information by indicating: your personal need—to be used outside of your employment (if employed).
Question: Please indicate your need for the described information by indicating your personal need—to be used outside of your employment (if employed).

Personal Need ratings did not significantly differ based on education level. Three exceptions are depicted, where yellow highlighted means differ significantly between high and low(est).
General Public Family Need Estimates

Content with Significant Differences by Educational Level

Database/Resource: General Public Current Family Need Estimates by Education Level—Database/Resource with Significant Differences Only (yellow highlight)

Highest Need (5)

High Need (4)

Moderate Need (3)

Minimal Need (2)

Little or No Need (1)

Genealogy/Family History Resources

Health Resources and Databases

Some high school or diploma  
Some college  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Master’s  
Doctorate

Question: Please indicate your need for the described information by indicating: your personal need—to be used outside of your employment (if employed).

Family Need ratings did not significantly differ based on education level. Two exceptions are depicted, where yellow highlighted means differ significantly from one another.
Question: Please indicate your need for the described information by indicating: your professional need—to be used outside of your employment (if employed).

Professional Need ratings did not significantly differ. Three exceptions are depicted, where yellow highlighted means differ significantly between Doctorate (high) and all others.
Question: Thinking about your experiences with each database/resource area use across your workplace, what would you estimate the amount of use each of the following types of resources receives in your organization? vs. Question: Please indicate your need for the described information by indicating: your personal need—to be used outside of your employment...
Current vs. Future Need Comparisons.
Question: How would you describe the current need for each of the following types of resources based on the people your organization serves? Question: Thinking ahead 3-5 years, what will be the future need for each of the following database/resources based on the people your organization serves—or is seeking to change its capacity to serve in the future?
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K-12 Library: Current vs. Future Need Estimates

Question: How would you describe the current need for each of the following types of resources based on the people your organization serves? Question: Thinking ahead 3-5 years, what will be the future need for each of the following database/resources based on the people your organization serves—or is seeking to change its capacity to serve in the future?
Patron Abilities and Need for Support.
Question: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

*Speaking broadly, the people who use our library:
Library Professional Estimates of Patron Abilities by Library Type

Question: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

*Speaking broadly, the people who use our library:
Preference for Supports.
Question: How effective do you believe each of the following delivery strategies would be in getting necessary support to the people who need it? (Ratings by Library Professionals for their own needs and for the General Public.)

Support Preferences as rated by Library Professionals

Weighted by Library Type

Library Use Supports for Library Professionals and for Patrons
As rated by Library Professionals (weighted by Library Type)
General Public Support Preferences
Weighted by Age

Library Use Supports for Patrons
Question: Which of the following would you use, if you needed help with the resources provided? (weighted by Age)

- Definitely Use (5)
- Probably Use (4)
- Might Use (3)
- Unlikely to Use (2)
- Would Not Use (1)

Would you use the following services:
- Webinars
- In-person Training
- Video tutorials
- PDF Quick Reference guides

Question: Which of the following would you use if you needed help with the resources provided?
General Public Support Preferences, by Age

Library Use Supports for Patrons
Question: Which of the following would you use, if you needed help with the resources provided? (by Age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-54</th>
<th>55-65</th>
<th>66+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Webinars</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-person Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video tutorials</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDF Quick Reference guides</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question: Which of the following would you use, if you needed help with the resources provided?
Related Elements to Facilitate Resource Use.
Importance of Related Elements for Use
Weighted by Library Type

Question: There are a range of related elements on which we can rely to make good use of the database/resources that are available. Below are three of these elements. How important you believe each one to be, in terms of being implemented with the revised database/resource access?
Importance of Related Elements for Use
by Library Type

Question: There are a range of related elements on which we can rely to make good use of the database/resources that are available. Below are three of these elements. How important you believe each one to be, in terms of being implemented with the revised database/resource access?
Utah’s Online Library

Utah’s Online Library is a virtual library created by the Utah State Library in cooperation with Utah’s public libraries, the Utah Academic Library Consortium, the Utah State Board of Education and Utah Education Network. The service available at no charge to Utah residents. Access to resources vary by library and include Utah’s Online Public Library serving patrons of public libraries, Utah’s Academic Online Library, designed for higher education students and faculty, Utah’s Online School Library for primary and secondary school students and teachers and Preschool Path, for early learners, their parents, and caregivers.

This collaborative approach to online library services has been successful since the Pioneer Online Library was founded in 1995. By combining resources for licensing, marketing, and outreach, Utah can realize cost savings and efficiency. In 2016 the name was changed to Utah’s Online Library and in 2019 the partners renamed their services to distinguish each partner’s service area.
About the Analyst.
Marshall serves as a thought partner to leaders seeking to hasten the collective impact of their organization’s investments. From assessing strengths and needs, to conceptualizing strategy and program initiatives, and then measuring return on investment, Marshall’s unique approach relies on a proven mix of assessment and evaluation, appreciative inquiry, and empathic understanding that predictably yields quantifiable results. His book, *Right from the Start: The Essential Guide to Implementing School Initiatives*, summarizes lessons learned through evaluation of hundreds of programs in both the public and private sectors.

He holds a Master of Arts, with an emphasis in Education Technology from San Diego State University and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Education from Claremont Graduate University.

He can be reached at jmarshall@jamesmarshallconsulting.com