2021 Patron Survey Report

# Introduction

In the final quarter of 2021, the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled released a public survey to several distribution lists that focus on meeting the needs of individuals who are blind, low-vision, or who otherwise print disabled. The survey was also released on social media and carefully selected partner agencies. The questionnaire was designed in two sections: “Yes, I attended library events” and “No, I did not attend library events.”

# Overall Summary:

The survey was supposed to allow us to answer three unwritten questions:

1. Why is attendance so low for many of the library events?
2. What is the future of library events?
3. What changes in marketing/outreach need to be made to advertise events?

Patrons and potential patrons were asked to complete a survey, with questions on a “yes” or “no” on attending previous library events in CY 2021. The survey was sent out via listserv (NFB, LBPD) and social media. It was **not** shared with public libraries as we did not want confusion about who should be answering the survey.

Answers were revealed to show that in both camps, those who attended and those who did not, there was a disconnect between what was offered in CY21 did not match the expectation of the patrons. Many of those who did not attend noted that they could not participate due to time/day conflicts, not knowing about the event until the event had passed and that they wanted events more fine-tuned events. For those who did attend library events, quite a few responses indicated that they would prefer more interactive events, more events that are not health-focused, and that the time/day of the events matters greatly.

# Library Attendance

Question: “Did you attend any library events in the 2021 calendar year?”

## No, I did not attend library events:

Out of 37 responses, 56.8% stated that they did not attend library events in CY21.

## Yes, I attended programs at that library:

Out of 37 responses, 43.2% stated that they did attend library events in CY21.

# “No, I did not attend library events” response summaries:

Questions and Answers are below. Most were multiple selections, meaning patrons were free to choose more than one answer, and thus not all totals will add up to 100% exactly.

## Section Summary & Highlights:

In this section, patrons and community members were asked why they were unable or unwilling to attend a library event or program. Many of the responses were very straightforward. However, a few showed the need for clarifying questions in the future or for follow-up questions to be asked of participants.

For example, patrons were asked the primary reason they did not attend. The answer was overwhelming that they were uninsured in the events being offered; in the same token, they were also overwhelmingly satisfied with the library’s current selection of events. **This indicates several possibilities: 1) that patrons may not be aware of the various events and programs being offered, 2) they are confused about the wording of events utilized by the library, and 3) that they were satisfied with the events being offered, but they were not of particular interest to them.**

The survey indicates that Thursdays and Saturdays, between 12 PM and 5 PM, are the most requested days and times to hold an event. Library events traditionally run on Tuesday (UME), Wednesday (single presentation), and Saturday (TUG). The library’s adult events, not including TUG, were coordinated through the Marketing & Outreach Librarian and were subject to the Librarian’s evening availability. The Marketing & Outreach Librarian based the times (6:30 PM – 8:00 PM) on the fact that many patrons have additional assistance to utilize FreeConferenceCall.com or Zoom, the library’s chosen platforms. **This updated information can be considered for future events, but all events need to wrap up by 4:30 PM as the library closes at 5:00 PM.**

When asked about receiving communication about library events, 83% of those who did not attend any library events in CY21 stated that they would prefer to receive notices via automated email, followed by finding information on our library’s website (25%). Zoom was overwhelmingly selected (71%) as the preferred platform, but barely anyone responded (7%) that Free Conference Call was a preferred method. **This shows that patrons prefer automated messages to the listserv messages we currently use, but many are either unaware or confused as to what Free Conference Call is and how to use it.**

Finally, there seems to be a disconnect between the events the library offers and the events patrons request. Over the CY21, the library provided 12 “healthy living” teleconferences in partnership with UME, 12 technology-focused events via TUG, two legal rights events, three literature-based events, one pet care event, and one independent living event. However, 52% of respondents who did not attend any events at LBPD in CY21 stated that they wanted health-focused events, and 42% focused on literature and writing. **This begs the question: What health events are our patrons asking us to provide? When UME surveyed to ask patrons what health events they’d like to experience, the library and UME presented programs based on those responses; were those who responded clear on their expectations and desires?**

## Questions & Answers:

### What is the primary reason you did not attend library events?

Out of 21 responses:

* 52% stated they were not interested in the events being offered.
* 33% stated that the days and times were not convenient.
* 13% stated they were unable to access the platform being used.
* 13% stated they were unaware that the library hosted events.

### Please rate your overall satisfaction with library events being offered at the library?

Out of 13 responses:

* 54% stated that they were satisfied with the library’s events.
* 30% stated they were delighted with the library’s events.
* 16% stated they were unsatisfied with the library’s events.

### Please provide additional details about your previous answer?

Out of 12 responses, most seemed focused on TUG or the library’s services in general:

* I think the library has excellent programming, but I wish that resources handouts were available later on the website for those who can't attend. I understand the need to track attendance by registration, but it's an extra step, and I wish the zoom link would be open.
* Most topics are interesting, but these events’ time conflicts with other things.
* even though I haven't been able to participate during the calls, I have listened to the recordings at a later time
* All I need are books. I do not like the "6 Book arrangement" but understand it is better for the Library and most other patrons.
* I work on Saturdays another day would be perfect but in the evenings
* can't see enough or buy to use technology offered
* I refer consumers to your program.
* I am grateful for the abundance of excellent tapes.
* N/A
* AT THIS TIME THE PANDEMIC AND Lack of income has prevented me from upgrading my computer with a camera and mic, so I am missing many of the events
* No comment - Thank you.
* Cannot see or attend events.

### What are days of the week better for your schedule?

Out of 11 responses:

* 36% stated that Thursday and Saturday were preferable.
* 27% stated that the other days of the week were preferable.

### What time of day is better for you?

Out of 15 responses:

* 47% stated that they prefer the afternoon between 12 and 5 PM.
* 33% stated that they prefer the morning between 9 and 11 AM.
* 20% stated they would prefer programs in the evening between 6 and 9 PM.

### If you were unaware of the library’s events, how would you like to be notified about upcoming events?

Out of 12 responses:

* 83% stated they would like to receive a notice via automated email.
* 25% stated they would like the information on the library website.
* 17% stated they would like to be informed by automated text message.
* 8% of individuals selected that automated phone calls, library blogs, or social media is their preferred choice for being notified.

### What platform do you prefer to access events through?

Out of 14 responses:

* 71% stated they preferred Zoom.
* 21% preferred either in person (M-F) or via Google Meets.
* 7% preferred either Free Conference Call or in person at a 3rd party location.

### What type of events would you like to see hosted by the library?

Out of 19 responses:

#### Healthy – 52%

* Cooking
* Healthy Living (General)
* Mental Health
* Medical Information
* Long Term Care Planning
* Estate Planning
* Employment

#### Location-Based – 57%

* Environmental/Outdoor
* Tactile Tours

#### Literature & Writing – 42%

* Story/Memoir Writing
* Book Discussion
* Literature/Poetry

#### History & Geography – 47%

#### Other – 31%

* Paranormal
* Live Performances

#### Patron comments

* Just the book I need to read
* Not able to drive or use a computer
* Hobby and Craft Classes
* Book discussions
* New Resources

# Yes, I attended programs at that library:

Questions and Answers are below. Most were multiple selections, meaning patrons were free to choose more than one answer, and thus not all totals will add up to 100% exactly.

## Section Summary & Highlights:

In this section, patrons and community members were asked questions about their attendance at a library event or program. Many of the responses were very straightforward. However, a few showed the need for clarifying questions in the future or for follow-up questions to be asked of participants.

For example, patrons were asked which events they attended during CY21 and overwhelmingly indicated that they attended TUG events at least once. The UME teleconferences expected response of about 1/3 of the 15 answers.

The survey indicates that Saturdays, Mondays, and Fridays, between 6 PM and 9 PM, were the best days and times to hold a library event. Library events traditionally run on Tuesday (UME), Wednesday (single presentation), and Saturday (TUG). The library’s adult events, not including TUG, were coordinated through the Marketing & Outreach Librarian and were subject to the Librarian’s evening availability. The Marketing & Outreach Librarian based the times (6:30 PM – 8:00 PM) on the fact that many patrons have additional assistance to utilize FreeConferenceCall.com or Zoom, the library’s chosen platforms. **This updated information can be considered for future events on Monday, Friday, or Saturday evenings in the evening.**

When asked about receiving communication about library events, 80% of those attending library events in CY21 stated that they would prefer Zoom to other event platforms. This was followed closely by Free Conference Call, which 63% of respondents said they’d like to use. **The question, “How would you like to be notified of events?” was omitted from this survey section.** Overall, however, this section was positively received as many of the patrons indicated that they would attend events over Zoom, regardless of notification.

Finally, there seems to be a disconnect between the events the library offers and the events patrons request. Over the CY21, the library of provided “healthy living” teleconferences in partnership with UME, 12 technology-focused events via TUG,two2 legal rights events, three literature-based even ones, and one pet care anyone one independent living event. However, 81% of respondents who attended library events stated they would like to see more location-based events (i.e., tactile tours, outdoor), and 94% focused on literature and writing. This survey section indicated that many of the patrons were less likely to attend library events on healthy living. **This begs the question: Would it be better to host all non-tactile, non-location-based events as a podcast, ensuring a wide variety of events, and leave the balances as a possible quarterly event?**

## Questions & Answers:

### Which library events have you attended in the last year?

Out of 15 responses:

* 53% of the respondents stated that they attended a TUG program
* 33% of the respondents stated they attended UME teleconferences and MD Centers for Independent living
* 20% stated that they attended the Life Story Writing event.
* 13% stated that they attended Pet Care in Hot Weather.
* 7% stated that they the Seeing Eye Information Session.
* There were no respondents for Maryland Legal Aid, Victims Advocate Information Session, or the International Spy Museum (though each did attendees)

### Please rate your overall experience with attending a library event?

Out of 15 responses:

* 73% stated they were delighted.
* 27% stated they were satisfied.
* There were unsatisfied responses.

### What are days of the week better for your schedule?

Out of 15 responses:

* Saturdays – 66%
* Mondays – 53%
* Fridays – 53%
* Sundays – 48%
* Wednesdays – 40%
* Tuesdays & Thursdays – 33%

### What time of day is better for you?

Out of 16 responses:

* 67% stated that Evening (6 PM to 9 PM) was their preferred time.
* 40% stated that the Afternoon (12 PM to 5 PM) is their preferred time.
* 33% stated that the Morning (9 AM to 11 AM) is their preferred time.

### What platform do you prefer to access events through?

Out of 16 responses:

* 80% preferred Zoom.
* 63% preferred Free Conference Call.
* 25% preferred Google Meets.
* 18% preferred In Person at the library or a 3rd party location.

### What type of events would you like to see hosted by the library in the future?

Out of 16 responses:

#### Healthy – 31%

* Cooking
* Healthy Living (General)
* Mental Health
* Medical Information
* Long Term Care Planning
* Estate Planning
* Employment

#### Location-Based – 81%

* Environmental/Outdoor
* Tactile Tours

#### Literature & Writing – 94%

* Story/Memoir Writing
* Book Discussion
* Literature/Poetry

#### History & Geography – 68%

#### Other – 88%

* Paranormal
* Live Performances
* Social Networking for Patrons
* Poetry & Karaoke

#### Patron comments

* Great for people that live a distance away that there is the phone option
* I love the Technology User Group events, and they are convenient for me to attend on Saturday. Other events are when I am working and cannot participate during the day.
* Wonderful topics covered. I couldn't attend all those I wanted to because of scheduling conflicts.
* I find Eventbrite registrations extremely inaccessible with JAWS. I'd attend more events if they were straight Zoom registrations without going through Eventbrite.
* It is impossible for me to attend live events, so the ZOOM meetings are wonderfully convenient.
* Educational & learning good Q & A topics.
* I thought the material covered was informative and thorough, and enjoyable.
* Educational & learning about who can be of service.
* Program was very informative and concise
* Too much Apple. I am Android. Too much conversation before they get to the point. Have social time after so that people in a hurry can reach the end and leave, and those not on schedule can chat

# Conclusion:

The survey was supposed to allow us to answer three unwritten questions:

1. Why is attendance so low for many of the library events?
2. What is the future of library events?
3. What changes in marketing/outreach need to be made to advertise events?

The following answers were determined by Marketing & Outreach but not evaluated by the LBPD management team at large:

1. Many patrons are aware that the library hosts events, and while many people are satisfied with the slate of programming offered, they would like to see more fine-tuned events. With limited times/dates that are compatible with the library and with patron schedules, it is possible that low-interaction events/programs could be hosted as podcast events with an option to allow questions to be submitted ahead of time. Additionally, we need to determine which “healthy living” events requested are not being met by the UME collaborative.
2. The library’s future events need to be fine-tuned to customer expectations. The library should host more interactive events based on tactile, outdoor, and save non-tactile events for podcasts that can be played on demand. The library should also follow up the survey with an open suggestion box for program/event/speaker recommendations to allow customers to better detail and pinpoint what they would like to attend virtually or in person at a 3rd party location.
3. Patrons who did not attend events in CY21 stated that they did not know about the possibilities. Events are currently advertised on our calendar, our website, via listserv, and when applicable, via social media. These are excellent avenues but can be done in addition to an upcoming events calendar for cartridges going in the mail, a call-in to listen to pre-recorded events, a list of forthcoming events, reminder texts/SMS, and registration via phone/web/SMS reminders. Or we were perhaps hosting a call-in event where patrons can call in to hear the latest event without actually attending?