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Examining the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Community Engagement with Library Programming at Academic and Public Libraries through a Survey Approach

ABSTRACT

Programming and community engagement is a core tenet of librarianship. The COVID-19 pandemic radically disrupted how libraries were able to engage their patrons, and librarians are still seeking to understand its lasting impacts on library programming and community-building. This study aims to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted community engagement with library programming, identify common challenges for academic and public library programming, and pinpoint common approaches for successfully engaging communities following the height of the pandemic by administering a survey to academic and public library workers involved in organizing or facilitating library programming. Among survey respondents, we found some academic and public library program offerings have returned to pre-pandemic engagement levels, whereas others still see a noticeable drop-off. Both groups have experimented with various programming and marketing strategies to combat this issue. Multiple academic and public library workers noted registration numbers were not indicative of attendance, and that drop-in hands-on programming tended to be more successful.

KEYWORDS

library programming, community engagement, academic libraries, public libraries, COVID-19 pandemic

Library programming plays a vital role in fostering lifelong learning, promoting library services, and building community engagement. Programming can take many different forms between institutional types, ranging from story times and book clubs to skill development workshops and social events. By offering relevant and responsive programming, libraries continue to be dynamic centers of knowledge and innovation in their communities. However, the COVID-19 pandemic radically disrupted the structures of community engagement, forcing libraries to adapt their programming and outreach strategies. Many public and academic libraries

had to close their doors during lockdown, pivoting from primarily in-person to virtual programming. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS, 2023) reported that on average 59% of surveyed public libraries provided live virtual programs during the first nine months of the pandemic, and 60% created and provided online recordings of program content. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey administered in 2021 reported that 79% of surveyed academic libraries offered classes primarily in-person before the pandemic (Taylor, 2023). During the 2020–2021 academic year, that shifted to an average of 56% of surveyed libraries offering classes primarily online; 36% a mix of online, in-person, and hybrid; and 8% primarily in-person (Taylor, 2023). In addition to platform changes, pandemic-related social isolation disrupted lifestyles and routines, heightened emotional distress and mental health challenges, and had broadscale negative economic impacts, but also offered opportunities for improved relationships, personal growth, and increased awareness of technological accessibility accommodations (Arora et al., 2024; Ponce et al., 2024). As libraries sought to provide programming that meets needs and interests of their communities, programming adapted in consideration of lockdowns.

As the acute lockdown phase of the pandemic receded, a “new normal” emerged as did a need to assess how libraries approach programming and whether these methods are successful in engaging communities. As academic librarians involved in library programming at New York University, we noticed new patterns surface in relation to student registration, attendance, and interest in library offerings. Colleagues at other public and academic libraries informally shared similar experiences of shifts in community engagement, leading us to develop and distribute a national survey to understand what changes, if any, public and academic library workers see at their institutions since the pandemic outbreak. Our study aims to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted community engagement with library programming, identify common challenges for academic and public library programming, and recognize solutions for successfully engaging communities following the height of the pandemic. In this study, we sought further understanding by addressing questions such as these: How do library workers define successful programming and has that changed since the pandemic? What changes in patron attitudes and behaviors have library workers noticed? How do libraries adapt programming to meet changing needs of their communities? We conducted a national survey to begin to address those research questions.

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Literature Review

Definitions

Fraser-Arnott (2023) recognize three types of engagement: related to the relationships between marketer and customer, as an expansion of use of library services and library collections, and manner in which interaction between libraries and library patrons occur. For the purpose of this study, library community engagement is defined as the latter. In our study, library programming is defined as “any planned event which introduces the group attending to any of the broad range of library services or activities or which directly provides information to participants. Programs may cover use of the library, library services, or library tours. Programs may also provide cultural,

recreational, or educational information, often designed to meet a specific social need” (IMLS, 2018b, p. 14). Formal invited instruction (e.g., classroom instruction) is not included in the scope of library programming for this study.

Types of Library Programming

The goal of programming is to meet needs or interests of the library community and patrons (Norlander et al., 2020). A variety of factors, such as demographics, influence patrons’ needs. For academic and public libraries, patron audiences can look different. Academic libraries primarily serve students, faculty, and staff, whereas public libraries serve a larger body of patrons of more diverse ages and backgrounds depending on location and institutional mission. As students and faculty at higher education institutions are involved in knowledge acquisition for scholarly pursuits, academic libraries often aim to help patrons develop and maintain research skills, with programming typically focused on curricular and cocurricular engagement, which can take many forms: instructional workshops, speaker events, orientations, film screenings, social gatherings, and wellness programming (Kasten-Mutkus, 2020).

Public libraries serve a wider community than do academic libraries, so they accordingly offer a wider variety of programming accessible to specific age demographics (e.g., children’s programming, young adult programming, and adult programming), with the goal of creating connected, knowledgeable, creative, civically engaged, healthy, economically vital, welcoming, joyful, and caring communities (IMLS, 2018a; Knology, 2024). Public library programming can take the form of story times, arts and crafts, speaker events, social gatherings, educational or skill-building workshops, health screenings, and more (Knology, 2024; Luo, 2018). Social and political trends can shape programming in public institutions. For example, Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! initiative motivated public libraries to create fitness programming (Lenstra, 2018). In a fundamentally different way, the COVID-19 pandemic created social and political trends that shaped programming in public institutions.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Library Programming

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted library programming in multiple ways, forcing libraries to adapt and innovate to continue serving their communities. One area impacted was development of programming skills. Sheppard et al. (2019) surveyed library workers involved in programming and identified nine core library programming competencies: organizational skills, knowledge of the community, interpersonal skills, event planning, creativity, content knowledge, outreach and marketing, financial skills, and evaluation. Organizational, event planning, and financial skills are necessary to plan, manage, implement, and budget for programs. Knowledge of the community enables library workers to ensure programming meets community needs and interests, and is accessible to all community members. Interpersonal outreach and marketing skills are needed to promote and appropriately communicate with stakeholders and audiences. Creativity and content knowledge skills help with problem-solving and ensuring library workers have sufficient knowledge to deliver and manage programs. Evaluation skills help measure program effectiveness and impact on community audiences. From reviewing American Library Association (ALA)-accredited library and information sciences graduate program websites, it is noted that 50 of 58 programs had publicly available materials on courses that address programming, but no institution required students to take these courses (Sheppard et al., 2019). In a survey of 1,247 librarians, Norlander et al. (2020) found that “nearly all respondents reported learning programming skills on the

job, with many reporting informal training and other learning from colleagues, or some combination of these” (p. 197). This is an important consideration in the context of COVID-19’s impact on library programming, as the pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge to librarians working in this area—many of whom likely had little to no formal training to rely on and limited access to more experienced colleagues for advice.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a lockdown phase, which required people to self-isolate at home as a preventative measure to reduce spread of the virus (Ponce et al., 2024). As a result, many academic and public libraries pivoted to online programming, some for the first time (IMLS, 2023; Taylor, 2023). As the lockdown phase subsided, many libraries continued to offer virtual and hybrid programming as they returned to in-person programming. Public Library Association (PLA, 2024) surveyed 1,511 U.S. public libraries between 2021 and 2023, finding 41.1% of public libraries continued to offer online programming—slightly less than the reported 48.7% in 2020, suggesting renewed focus on in-person programming. Some public libraries found that offering online and hybrid programming increased reach to community members who did not previously frequent the library. Parish and Bryant (2025) shared a case study of a branch library in Columbus, Ohio: Bexley Public Library, which “reach[ed] around 89 more people per program by offering a hybrid model with options to attend via live stream or watch the recording later” (p. 15). Although online programming has been beneficial for some, others leaned away from online and hybrid programming after the lockdown phase (PLA, 2024). Many factors may have contributed to this, such as local or state policies encouraging return to in-person programming or in-person programming being the preferred platform for community members.

In contrast, academic libraries were still showing “signs of recovery from pandemic low ... still lagging relative to pre-pandemic levels” (ACRL, 2024, p. 4). Aronoff et al. (2023) used a survey instrument to explore the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on library workshops within health sciences. Researchers found almost two-thirds of respondents continued to offer primarily online workshops since the COVID-19 vaccine became widely available, despite “the most frequently cited challenge was that instructors found it hard to visually assess understanding in an online environment” (Aronoff et al., 2023, p. 661). Although assessing understanding and engagement in an online environment was a greater challenge, academic libraries continued to prioritize online workshops, which suggested a potential preference of academic library communities.

During the second year of the pandemic, Jackson et al. (2023) interviewed 40 undergraduate students on perceptions of hybrid education, finding that although students enjoyed flexibility in classroom attendance and scheduling, they reportedly struggled with the lack of social interaction, engagement, community, classroom experience (peer-to-peer engagement), and time management. Forty-seven percent of participants indicated “struggle or lack of connection or social interactions,” and 23% indicated Zoom fatigue as a challenge to attend remote campus engagement events (Jackson et al., 2023). Similarly, in fall 2023, Schultz (2025) interviewed 19 graduate students about motivations and challenges to attending library workshops, and found “students liked attending live, in-person workshops for the social aspects and making workshops seem more like social or networking events could build community and provide social engagement to facilitate learning, reduce stress, and expand social support networks” (p. 7). Although some academic libraries continued to prioritize virtual programming, Jackson et al. (2023) and Schultz (2025) noted a pattern of undergraduate and graduate student preferences for

in-person programming due to its social aspects. However, discrepancies might exist between what surveyed library patrons state they want and what they do in practice. Many patrons, particularly students, have busy schedules so virtual programming offers flexibility that can be appealing.

This literature review notes that several studies investigated the offerings of virtual and hybrid programming, and the impact on community engagement with academic and public libraries, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, we surveyed library workers on changes they observed in community engagement, whether this impacted how they assessed programming success, and how they adapted programming to meet changing needs in their communities.

Methodology

Survey Development

The overall goal of this study was to undertake a preliminary assessment of how community engagement with library programming may have changed following the COVID-19 pandemic, and identify potential patterns and trends observed by library workers involved in organizing or facilitating programming. An online survey was identified as the most efficient method for gathering information on what various public and academic libraries are observing and how they are adapting. The survey focused on three interrelated questions: What metrics do academic and public library workers use to determine success of programming? Has programming success changed since the pandemic ended? What library community behavior changes in attendance and preferences are observed, if any, in response to programming since the pandemic? The survey, developed by the authors using Qualtrics, was administered to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. Qualtrics was set so as not to gather IP locations or other identifying information. Demographic questions, such as library type and community size served, were applied to provide context to help evaluate responses without identifying participants. The majority of questions were in multiple-choice format, some with optional space for free response for participants to provide context. As programming involvement and considerations can vary between various roles and institutions, each question on the survey was optional to answer, which resulted in varying sample sizes between questions.

The survey utilized branching logic to delineate library workers based on if and when they had programming experience: library workers with no experience, library workers with experience before the pandemic only, library workers with experience since the start of the pandemic, and library workers with experience both before and since the pandemic. As library workers may have changed roles or institutions since the COVID-19 pandemic, branching logic was also used to identify those who had programming experience at the same institution from individuals experienced at different institutions before and since the pandemic. A pilot survey was offered to colleagues, to solicit feedback and check functionality. The full survey text is in Appendix 1. The study protocol was submitted to New York University's Institutional Review Board and determined exempt from full review (IRB-FY2024-9009).

Participants

Target audience for the survey was library workers involved in organizing or facilitating programming. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2019). Survey invitations were distributed on August 14, 2024, via email distribution lists for professional organizations with which the authors were affiliated: ALA, ALA Spectrum

Scholarship Program, ALA Emerging Leaders Program, ACRL, ACRL University Libraries Section, ACRL Science and Technology Section, PLA, American Society for Engineering Education Engineering Librarians Division, American Indian Library Association, Asian Pacific American Librarians Association, Chinese American Librarians Association, Black Caucus American Library Association, REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking, and We Here. A first reminder email to complete the survey was sent September 17, 2024, and a final reminder was sent October 15, 2024. At the ACRL 2025 Conference, on April 3, we presented a poster with a QR code for the survey and received four more academic library worker responses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Survey responses were aggregated in an Excel spreadsheet and organized by library type and experience with programming before and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey respondents were assigned participant IDs to maintain confidentiality. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize quantitative data. For data comparing the change in successful programming since the pandemic, paired t-tests were run using R to determine statistical significance. Qualitative data from open-response questions were manually reviewed for main themes in each response and organized into categories in Excel.

Results

Demographics of Respondents

The survey received responses from 112 library workers, 53 of whom worked at academic libraries and 59 at public libraries. Of the 53 academic library workers, 32 self-reported having experience with library programming both before and since the pandemic, and only 24 of 32 fully completed the survey. Of the 59 public library workers, 40 self-reported having experience with library programming both before and since the pandemic, four self-reported having experience only since the pandemic, and just 26 of 40 fully completed the survey. A limitation of this study is its low survey completion rate, which could potentially introduce bias. It is possible the length and perceived complexity of the survey contributed to participant fatigue and incomplete responses. As many involved in programming also have other roles, factors such as limited time availability or competing demands on participants' attention may have also influenced their ability or willingness to complete the survey. While results of this study cannot be used to generalize to the broader population, for further studies, they can provide insight into observed phenomena, trends, and patterns in community engagement with library programming.

All questions on the survey were optional to answer, to accommodate various levels of programming involvement and different considerations across institutions, resulting in varying sample sizes. With this in mind, the relevant sample sizes are provided throughout the conducted analysis.

Percentage of Successful Programming

To understand how the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted the percentage of successful library programs, it was important to establish how public and academic libraries define success. The survey asked respondents to rate importance of five metrics related to assessing success of a library program. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, academic library workers considered the following factors to be important when assessing success of their programming: relevance to community (18 of 26 respondents, or 69%), attendance rate (17 of 26 respondents, or 65%), attendee participation (17 of 26 respondents, or 65%), and

Examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community engagement with library programming at academic and public libraries through a survey approach, *continued*

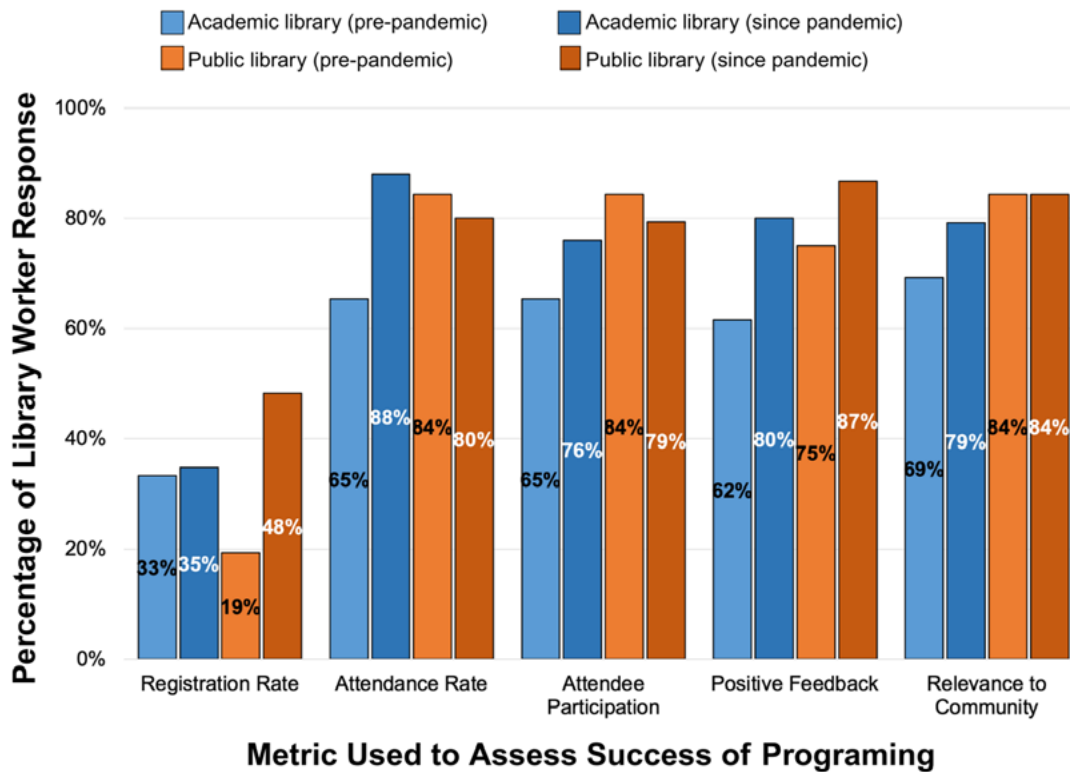
positive feedback from patrons (16 of 26 respondents, or 62%). Only 33% (7 of 21 respondents) considered registration rate to be important. Since the pandemic, library workers reported prioritizing shifted order: attendance rate (22 of 25 respondents, or 88%), feedback (20 of 25 respondents, or 80%), relevance to community (19 of 24 respondents, or 79%), and attendee participation (19 of 25 respondents, or 76%).

For public libraries pre-pandemic, library workers considered the most important success metrics to be as follows: relevance to community (27 of 32 respondents, or 84%), attendance rate (27 of 32 respondents, or 84%), attendee participation (27 of 32 respondents, or 84%), and positive feedback from patrons (24 of 32 respondents, or 75%). Six out of 31 respondents (19%) used registration rate as an important metric to assess success. Since the pandemic, the same metrics were prioritized with slight shifting of orders: relevance to community (26 of 30 respondents or 87%), positive feedback from patrons (26 of 30 respondents or 87%), attendance rate (24 of 30 respondents or 80%), and attendee participation (23 of 29 respondents or 79%) (see Figure 1).

When asked to consider the total programming administered, those at academic libraries serving

small community sizes (populations of 5,000 and less) approximated an average of 83% was successful before the pandemic (N = 7) and 75% since the pandemic (N = 7), with public libraries serving small community sizes averaging 80% before (N = 1) and 85% since the pandemic (N = 2). For libraries serving midsize communities (5,000 to 15,000 residents), academic library workers reported 77% successful programming before the pandemic (N = 3) and 68% since the pandemic (N = 2), with public libraries having 83% before (N = 6) and 78% since the pandemic (N = 6). For libraries serving large communities (populations over 15,000), academic libraries averaged 70% successful

Figure 1
Percentage of Library Workers that Rated Metrics as “Important” or “Very important” in Determining the Success of a Program before and since the COVID-19 Pandemic



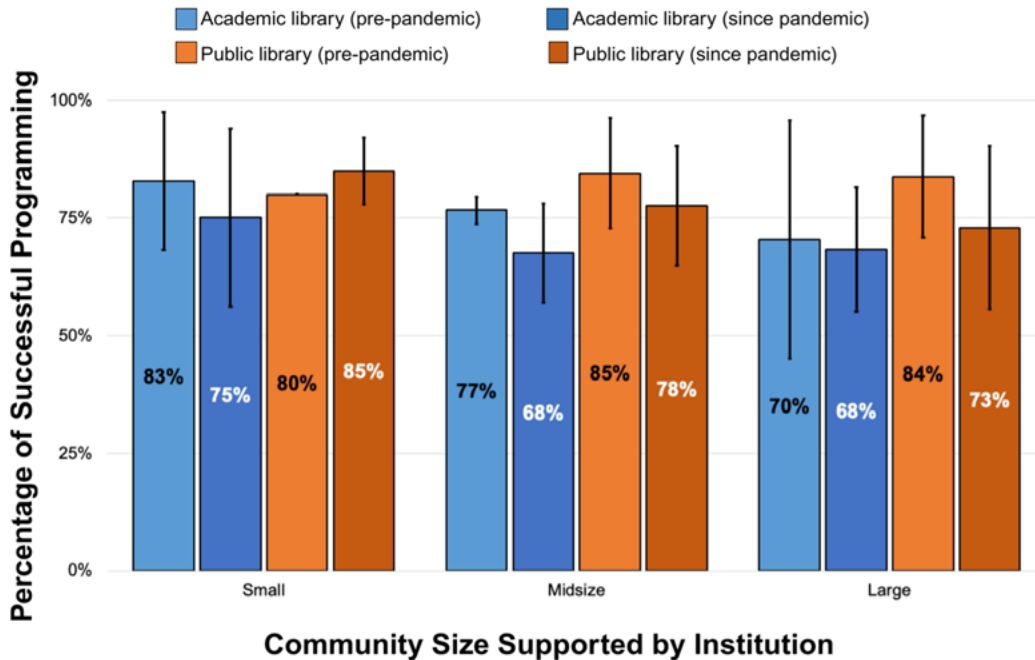
Note. For academic libraries (A), N = 21 for pre-pandemic registration rate, N = 26 for remaining pre-pandemic metrics, N = 23 for registration rate since the pandemic, N = 24 for relevance to community since the pandemic, and N = 25 for the remaining “since pandemic” metrics. For public libraries (B), N = 31 for pre-pandemic registration rate, N = 32 for remaining pre-pandemic metrics, N = 29 for the “since pandemic” registration rate and attendee participation, N = 30 for the remaining “since pandemic” metrics.

programming before the pandemic (N = 14) and 68% since the pandemic (N = 17), with public libraries averaging 80% before (N = 24) and 71% since (N = 26) (see Figure 2). In general, the average percentage of successful programming from libraries dropped modestly since the pandemic, but due to the relatively small sample size and large spread of data represented by the standard deviation, this difference should not be applied broadly across library types. Instead, the ranges provide insight into how academic and public library workers involved in programming perceive changes to program success since the pandemic ended.

When calculating the average difference in percentage of successful programming for surveyed individuals reporting about the same institution since the pandemic, academic and public library workers generally perceived a slight decrease in success (see Figure 3). All differences in all groups, with the exception of public libraries serving a large community size ($p = .043$), were not a statistically significant decrease ($p > .05$) due to the sample size and spread of data. Although not significant, the spread of data highlights an interesting pattern reinforced by qualitative data showing that some libraries found greater success by reaching new audiences or making new partnerships during the pandemic, and other libraries found decreased success related to changing community desires and behaviors. For example, a public library worker shared, "Our programs went from all in-person before the pandemic, to all virtual during the height of the pandemic, to hybrid as we were coming out of the pandemic. Currently, I would say that our program attendance is hitting numbers that are higher than prior to the pandemic." An academic library worker noted greater success as, "during the early days of the lockdown [the library] assisted faculty in converting their courses to virtual. Because of [this] the campus sees the workshops in a more positive way and is more supportive of them.... Many faculty offer extra credit for students if they attend a session." A few public library workers noted programming attendance had been lower: "Patrons are still being cautious about being around other people." Public and academic library workers noted, "Patrons' schedules are very full" so it can be difficult to secure attendance to events.

Figure 2

Average Percentage of Programming Perceived to Be Successful before and since the COVID-19 Pandemic



Note. For academic libraries, N = 7 for small pre-pandemic and since the pandemic, N = 3 for midsize pre-pandemic, N = 2 for midsize since the pandemic, N = 14 for large pre-pandemic, and N = 17 for large since the pandemic. For public libraries, N = 1 for small pre-pandemic, N = 2 for small since the pandemic, N = 6 for midsize pre-pandemic and since the pandemic, N = 23 for large pre-pandemic, and N = 26 for large since the pandemic. Error bars represent the standard deviation.

Types of Programming

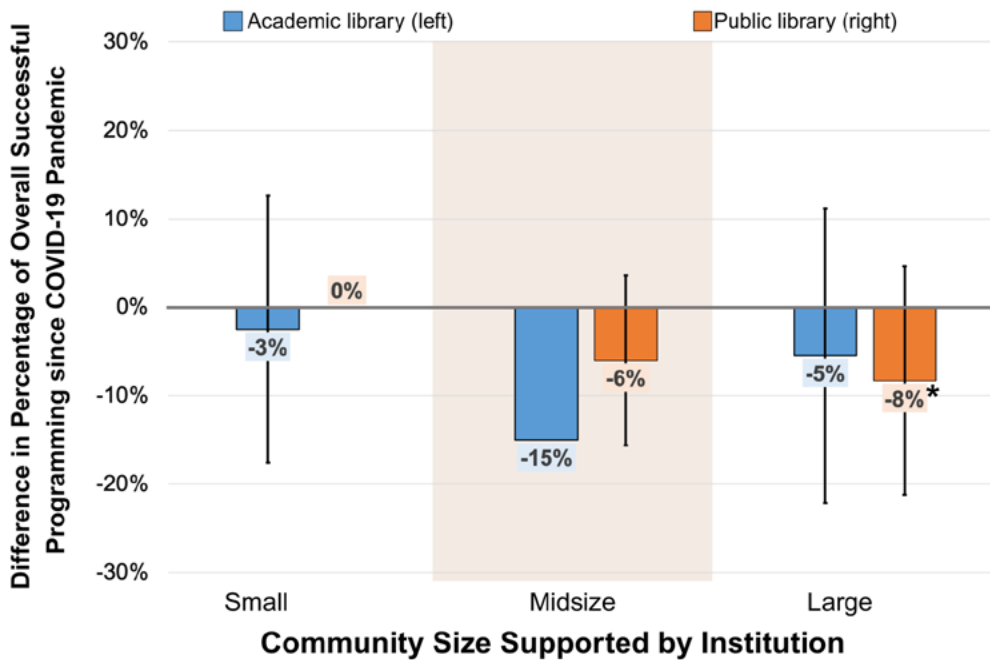
As the COVID-19 pandemic brought profound shifts in societal awareness around different topics, our data suggested a shift in the types of programs that were most successful. For academic libraries, programming such as “arts and leisure,” “book-related offerings,” “career development,” “educational, nontechnical,” and “local interests and community” decreased in success since the pandemic. “Educational, technical” and “health and wellness” programming had an average increase in success (see Figure 4A). Increased success with “educational, technical” programming could be attributed to the format, as noted by a surveyed academic library worker: “Having the infrastructure to provide educational workshops virtually has definitely increased attendance for those I am involved with!” Multiple academic library workers cited increased interest in mental health offerings. “The demand for more mindfulness/stress-relieving programs have [sic] definitely increased since COVID,” noted an academic library worker. Another echoed the sentiment: “There is more interest in hands-on programs, crafting, and more wellness programming. Students want to take a break from their studies through programs at the libraries.”

For public libraries, program types such as “book-related offerings,” “health and wellness,” and “local interests and community” decreased in success since

the pandemic. “Arts and leisure,” “educational, nontechnical,” and “educational, technical” increased in success since the pandemic. “Career development” remained unchanged (see Figure 4B). A public library worker reported decreased success in programming since the pandemic due to changes in community desires: “It seems that we are competing with many more outlets that are providing events and activities for families. I think families are looking for libraries to provide more large-scale events rather than the more traditional programming like book clubs, crafts, educational programming.” Although “arts and leisure” stood out as successful, a public library worker shared, “Cuts to the programming budget

Figure 3

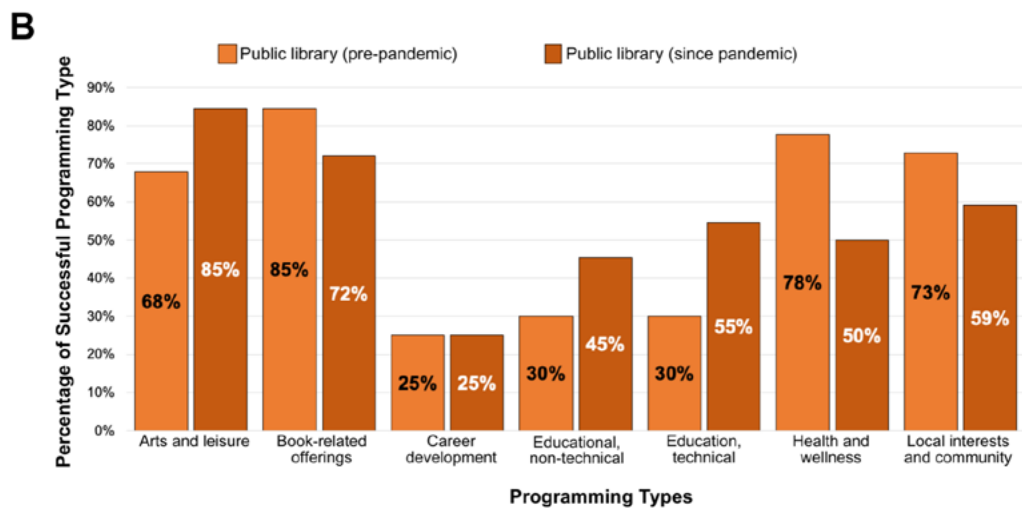
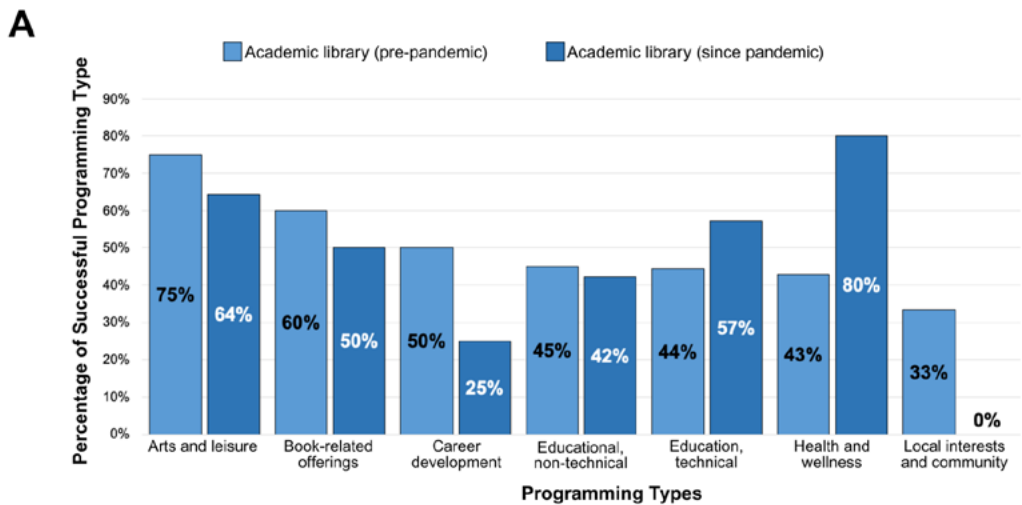
Average Difference in Percentage of Successful Programming since the COVID-19 Pandemic



Note. Paired t-tests were run to compare the percentage of successful programming before and since the pandemic for academic and public libraries serving different community sizes. Asterisk represents a p-value < .05. For small community size, N = 6 for academic libraries (p = 0.70), and N = 1 for public libraries. For midsize community size, N = 1 for academic libraries, and N = 6 for public libraries (p = 0.24). For large community size, N = 11 for academic libraries (p = 0.30), and N = 14 for public libraries (p = 0.04). Error bars represent the standard deviation.

Figure 4

Average Percentage of Perceived Successful Programming Based on Type Offered



Note. For academic libraries (chart A), N = 12 for arts and leisure programming pre-pandemic, N = 14 since the pandemic; N = 10 for book-related offerings pre-pandemic, N = 12 since the pandemic; N = 4 for career development programming pre-pandemic, N = 2 since the pandemic; N = 20 for nontechnical educational programming pre-pandemic, N = 19 since the pandemic; N = 9 for technical educational programming pre-pandemic, N = 14 since the pandemic; N = 7 for health and wellness programming pre-pandemic, N = 10 since the pandemic; and N = 3 for local interests and community programming pre-pandemic and since the pandemic. For public libraries (chart B), N = 28 for arts and leisure programming pre-pandemic, N = 26 since the pandemic; N = 26 for book-related offerings pre-pandemic, N = 25 since the pandemic; N = 8 for career development programming pre-pandemic, N = 12 since the pandemic; N = 10 for nontechnical educational programming pre-pandemic, N = 11 since the pandemic; N = 10 for technical educational programming pre-pandemic, N = 11 since the pandemic; N = 9 for health and wellness programming pre-pandemic, N = 12 since the pandemic; and N = 22 for local interests and community programming pre-pandemic and since the pandemic.

have affected my ability to purchase quality arts-and-craft supplies, turning off some adult customers.”

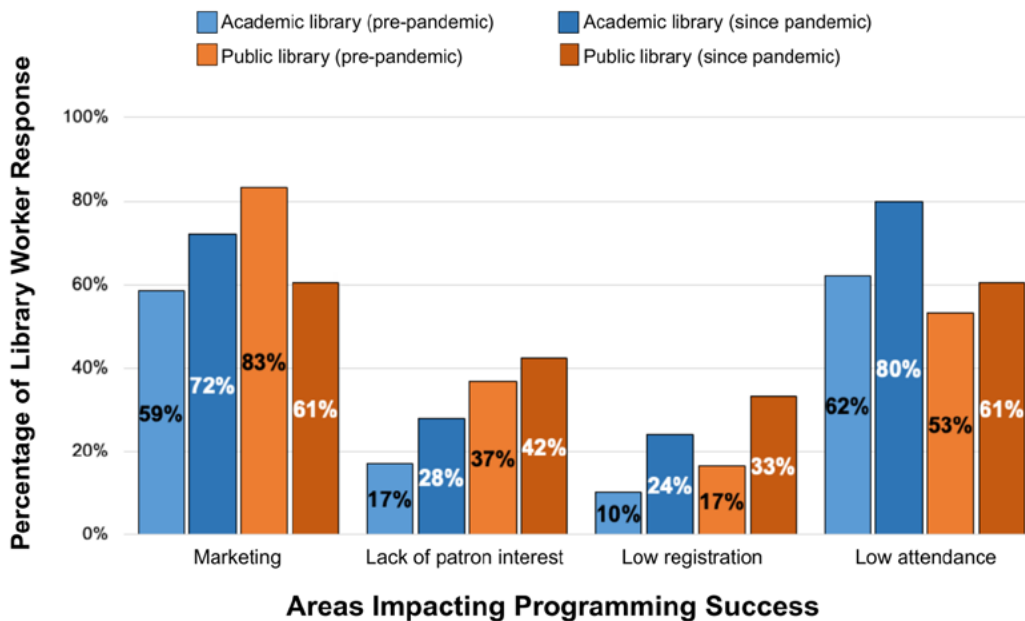
Areas Impacting Program Success

The survey asked library workers to identify areas they believe impact success of their programming. “Marketing” and “low attendance” were identified as the top two areas impacting success for academic and public libraries before and since the pandemic. Academic and public libraries both had increased averages in all areas since the pandemic compared with the pre-pandemic average, with the exception of “marketing” dropping from 83% (N = 30) to 61% (N = 33) for public libraries since the pandemic. Academic libraries had the largest increased average (+18%) for “low attendance,” and public libraries had the largest increase for “low registration” (+16%) since the pandemic (see Figure 5). However, it is important to note that among surveyed public libraries, 50% reported their institution prior to the pandemic did not have a registration system in place for programming (see Figure 6).

Multiple academic library workers mentioned outreach can be challenging: “It is also much harder to inform students and university community members

about events because not everyone is tuned in to the same resource (email, calendars, posters, social media, etc.). It feels like there isn’t a good central way to notify community members about events.” A notable difference between academic and public libraries in the qualitative data was that multiple public library workers mentioned having a public relations or outreach department to help with programming promotion and branding efforts. A public library worker shared, “Our marketing is now handled by a system-wide marketing department instead of individually in the branch,” which may

Figure 5
Areas Impacting Programming Success before and since the COVID-19 Pandemic



Note. For academic libraries, N = 29 for pre-pandemic and N = 25 for since the pandemic. For public libraries, N = 30 for pre-pandemic and N=33 for since the pandemic.

have contributed to the decrease in impact of marketing on programming success since the pandemic.

Changes to Registration, Expected Attendance, and Programming

Since the pandemic, more libraries now utilize a registration system for programming, particularly public libraries. Library workers at institutions with a registration system were asked to approximate the percentage of registrants expected to attend any given program (see Figure 7). Before the pandemic,

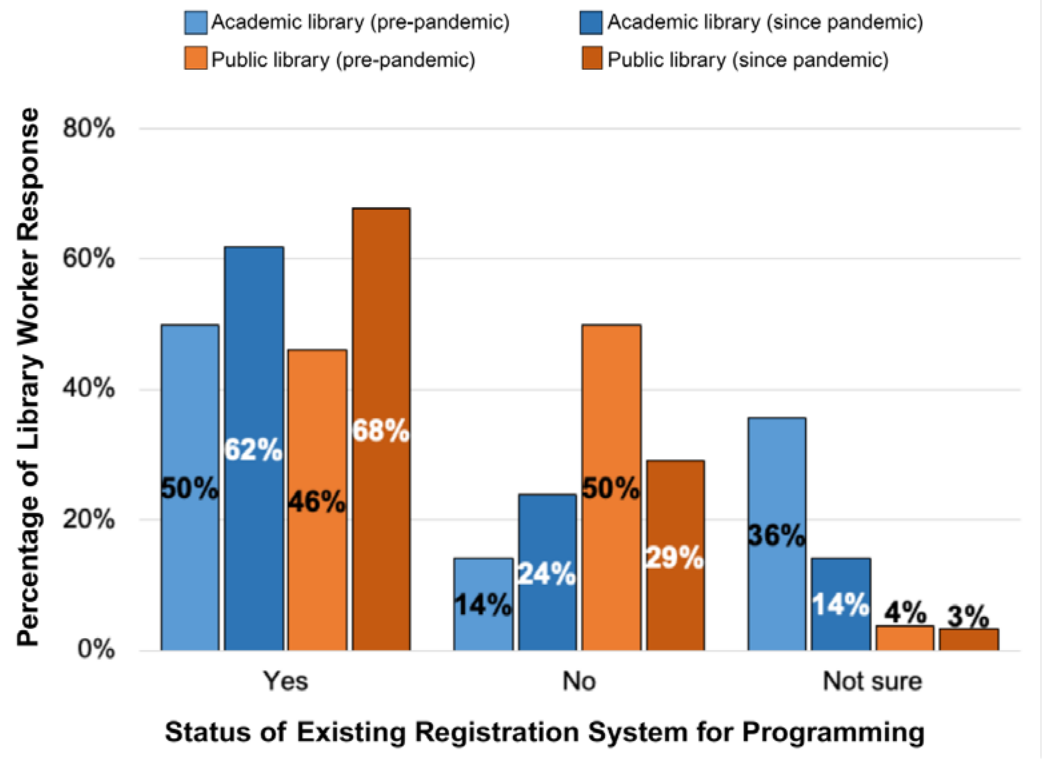
43% (6 of 14) of academic library workers expected 41% to 60% of registrants to attend a program, 21% (3 of 14) expected 61% to 81% of registrants to attend, and 21% (3 of 14) expected 81% to 100% of registrants to attend. Since the pandemic, a slight decrease was observed for a higher percentage of registrants as 52% (11 of 21) now expected 41% to 60% of registrants to attend, whereas 19% (4 of 21) expected 61% to 80% and 5% (1 of 21) expected 81% to 100%. Considering these expectations, before the pandemic, 64% (7 of 11) of academic library workers believed attendance would reach expectations most of the time, and 9% (1 of 11) believed about half the time, and 27% (3 of 11) sometimes (see Figure 8). Since the pandemic, 56% (10 of 18) of academic library workers believed attendance would reach expectations most of the time, 11% (2 of 18) half the time, 22% (4 of 18) sometimes, and 11% (2 of 18) never.

In comparison with academic libraries, public libraries reported having slightly higher registrant attendance expectations before the pandemic. Forty percent (10 of 25) of surveyed public library workers expected 61% to 80% of registrants to attend, and 28% (7 of 25) expected 81% to 100% of registrants to attend. Since the pandemic, there has been a larger spread of expectations with 28% (8 of 32) of public library workers expecting 41% to 60% of registrants to attend, 28% (8 of 32) expecting 61% to 80% of registrants, 22% (7 of 32) expecting 81% to 100% of registrants. Before the pandemic, 80% (16 of 20) of public library workers believed attendance would reach expectations “most of the time,” whereas 5% (1 of 20) and 10% (2 of 20) believed so “about half the time” and “sometimes,” respectively. Since the pandemic, 56% (18 of 32) of public library workers found attendance reaching expectations “most of the time,” 31% (10 of 32) reported expectations being met “about half the time,” and 9% (3 of 32) reported expectations met “sometimes.”

Academic and public library workers both noted discrepancies between registration and attendance. A public library worker shared, “Many of us avoid [registration] as we have found it to be a deeply unreliable indicator of how many people will attend day-of.” Another noted that “patrons lean towards programs that don’t require registration. ... Our registration fills up, but only 50% or less show up.” An academic library worker similarly reported, “We (and others outside the library on our campus) regularly see about 50% attendance

Figure 6

Libraries with Registration Systems for Programming before and since the COVID-19 Pandemic

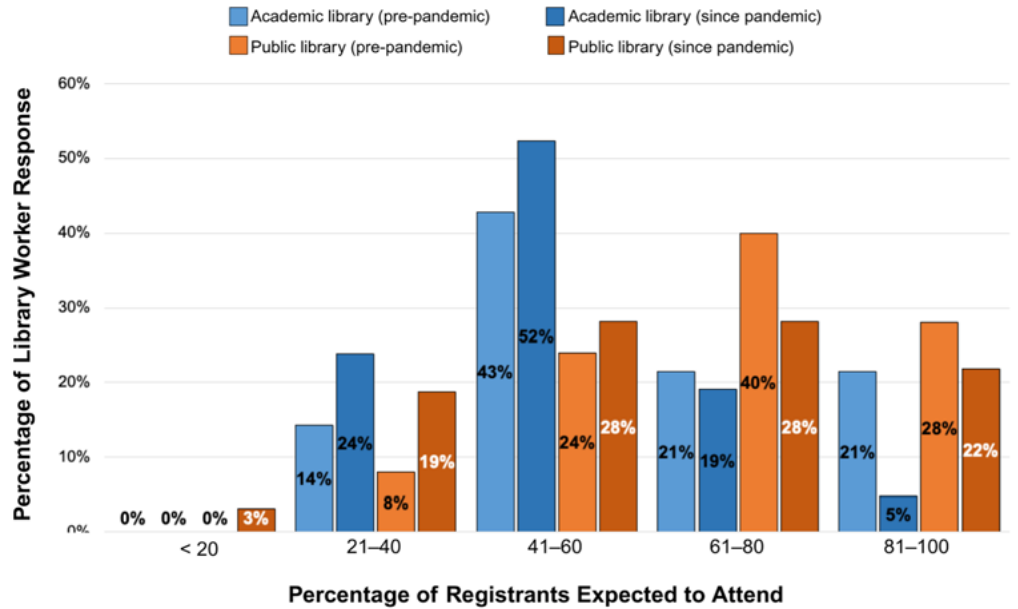


Note. For academic libraries, N = 14 for pre-pandemic and N = 21 for since the pandemic. For public libraries, N = 26 for pre-pandemic and N = 31 for since the pandemic.

Examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community engagement with library programming at academic and public libraries through a survey approach, *continued*

Figure 7

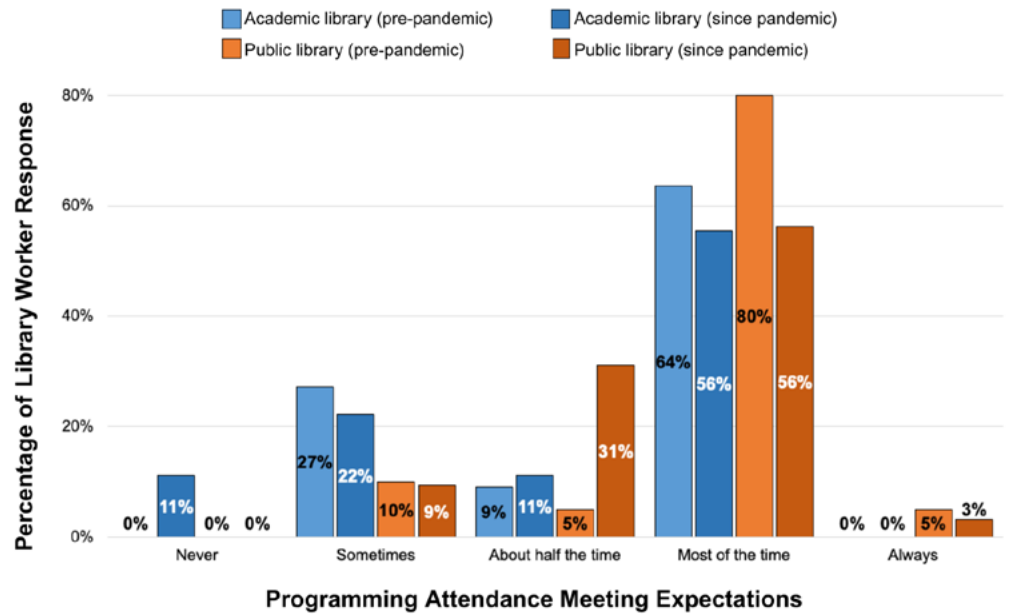
Expected Attendance Based on Programming Registration before and since the COVID-19 Pandemic



Note. For academic libraries, N = 14 for pre-pandemic and N = 21 for since the pandemic. For public libraries, N = 25 for pre-pandemic and N = 32 for since the pandemic.

Figure 8

Frequency of Attendance to Programming Meeting Expectations



Note. For academic libraries, N = 11 for pre-pandemic and N = 18 for since the pandemic. For public libraries, N = 20 for pre-pandemic and N = 32 for since the pandemic.

compared to the number registered. As we continue to offer similar workshops, attendance is dropping off.”

Changes to Programming Formats and Patron Attitudes

Overall, among the surveyed academic librarians, since the pandemic, 50% (9 of 18) reported an increased number of registrants, but 48% (11 of 23) reported a decreased number of attendees. Fifty-seven percent (13 of 23) reported a decrease in in-person programming offerings, and 52% (11 of 21) reported decrease in in-person programming attendance. Forty-three percent (9 of 21) reported an increase in virtual attendance as compared to in-person programming. In terms of format preference, 86% (18 of 21) reported an increase in virtual programming offerings, with 43% (9 of 21) reporting an increase in virtual attendance and 48% (10 of 21) reporting an increase in patron preference for virtual programming. Although academic library workers noted that communities prefer virtual programming, this does not consistently translate to attendance as one academic library worker shared, “Programs are expected to be virtual rather than in person. We have good registration numbers but low attendance.” Another academic library worker shared how their institution offered six synchronous online workshops across a semester, but no one attended. Two sessions “were taught ... to an empty Zoom room to create recordings that haven’t been viewed outside our staff. In spite of this, we’ve had multiple people mention how amazing those workshops were!”

Public libraries have a similar split between those who reported increases in registration (9 of 21, or 43%) and in attendees (9 of 25, or 36%) and those who reported decreases in registration (7 of 21, or 33%) and in attendees (13 of 25 or 52%). Fifty-six percent (14 of 25) reported an increase in in-person programming since the pandemic, but 52% (11 of 21) reported a decrease in in-person attendance, despite 48% (10 of 21) reporting patrons’ increased preference for in-person events. In comparison, 70% (14 of 20) reported an increase in virtual programming, with 43% (9 of 21) reporting an increase in virtual attendance, but 38% (8 of 21) reported decrease in virtual event preference (see Figure 9). There seems to be a discrepancy in format preference for patrons, as a public library worker noted, “We tend to have better engagement for certain types of adult programs, such as humanities lectures, if we have them virtually. After a customer survey, adults stated that they wanted more in-person adult programming so we adjusted and are offering more, but our attendance numbers don’t quite match what the projected want was, so we’re working on leveling that out.”

The majority of library workers reported positive and negative feedback has stayed the same since the pandemic. Forty-three percent (9 of 21) of public library workers reported increased patron interest in programming, whereas 33% (7 of 21) of academic library workers reported decreased patron interest (see Figure 10).

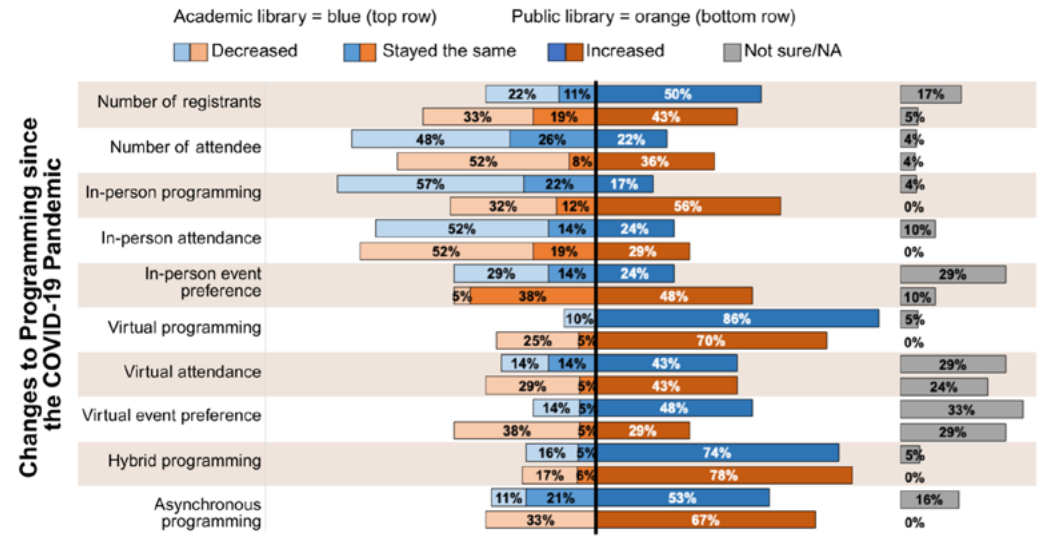
Themes

From the open-response questions, nine themes were identified: fatigue, program platform format, changing wants for programming, administrative effects, registration and attendance, community behavior, accessibility around programming, experimenting with programming, and marketing and outreach (see Table 1). Notable findings within each of these themes include the following:

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Figure 9

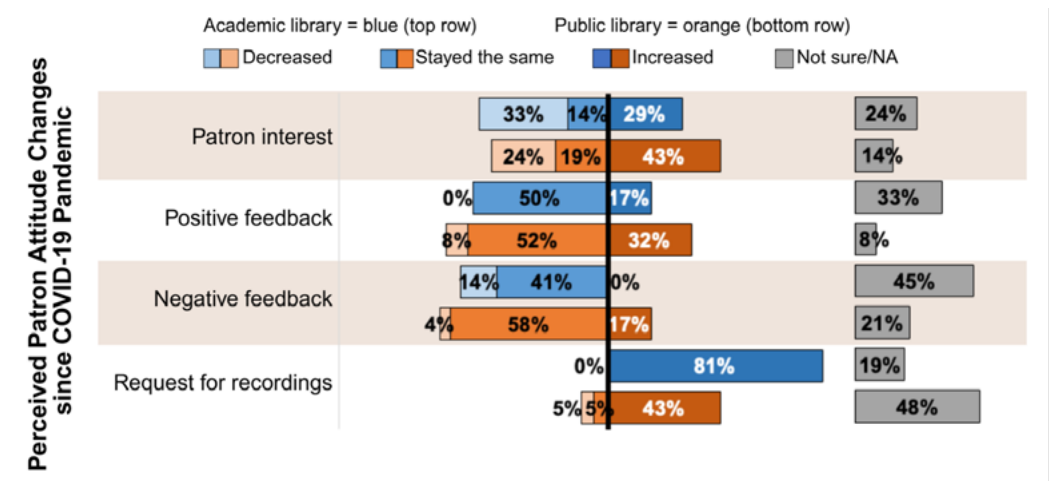
Percentage of Programming Changes since the COVID-19 Pandemic according to Academic and Public Library Workers



Note. For “number of registrants,” N = 18 for academic libraries and N = 21 for public libraries. For “number of attendees” and “in-person programming,” N = 23 for academic libraries and N = 25 for public libraries. For “in-person attendance” and “in-person event preference,” N = 21 for academic libraries and public libraries. For “virtual programming,” N = 21 for academic libraries and N = 20 for public libraries. For “virtual attendance” and “virtual event preference,” N = 21 for academic libraries and public libraries. For “hybrid programming,” N = 19 for academic libraries and N = 18 for public libraries. For “asynchronous programming,” N = 19 for academic libraries and N = 15 for public libraries.

Figure 10

Percentage of Patron Attitude Changes since the COVID-19 Pandemic according to Academic and Public Library Workers



Note. For “patron interest,” N = 21 for academic libraries and public libraries. For “positive feedback,” N = 24 for academic libraries and N = 25 for public libraries. For “negative feedback,” N = 22 for academic libraries and N = 24 for public libraries. For “request for recordings,” N = 21 for academic libraries and public libraries.

Fatigue

Although some libraries reported increased engagement and outreach through virtual offerings, one public library worker noted some patrons shared their disinterest in online activities due to “too much screen time” outside of library activities. Both academic and public library workers suggested patrons’ busy schedules may impact their community’s engagement. Academic library workers also noted staff fatigue leading to burnout, and patrons’ fatigue impacted library workers’ ability to commit to “extra” work in planning and facilitating programming as well as patrons’ ability to attend programming.

Program Platform Formats

Public and academic library workers noted the push for online or asynchronous programming during the pandemic. Public librarians indicated communities looked forward to returning to in-person programming as the pandemic waned, whereas academic librarians saw continued interest in hybrid and asynchronous programming.

Changing Community Wants for Programming

Academic and public library workers observed their community’s desire for active, hands-on programming that engages with the whole person. Academic library workers noted that although students requested in-person events, attendance did not support this claim.

Administrative Effects

Public library workers indicated staff and budget cuts impacting the number of program offerings and a need to demonstrate worth in the community. Academic library workers at public institutions noted requirements for recordings to be public and online programming to offer live transcriptions upon request.

Registration and Attendance

Public library workers shared that implementation of registration systems are not always reliable for predicting attendance and are not well-liked by patrons. Academic library workers shared mixed results, with some reporting an increase in attendance and others struggling to return to pre-pandemic numbers. Academic library workers also reported registration was no longer a reliable measure of expected attendance.

Community Behavior

Public library workers noted a return to pre-pandemic programming levels, with the exception of higher risk populations, as well as an increase in aggressive behavior in some libraries. One public library worker observed “personal insults or threats when offering ‘criticism’ about programs (some of which they aren’t even attending or interested in attending).” Other public library workers observed patrons looking for community and who expressed gratitude for programming. Academic library workers noted the library space remains an important hub for students on campus.

Accessibility around Programming

Academic and public library workers both noted interest in incorporating accessibility features, such as closed captioning and recordings, into programming and in some cases even sensed excitement around these tools. However, one academic library worker at a public institution indicated

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recordings can create complications around programming.

Experimenting with Programming

Public and academic library workers noted their excitement around experimenting with programming to meet evolving needs of patrons.

Marketing and Outreach

Academic and public library workers identified social media as an important tool for outreach. Public library workers noted that budgets can constrain outreach, and academic library workers indicated it is hard to break through to students who are already inundated with emails and other demands on their attention.

Table 1

Salient Themes, Definitions, and Selected Illustrative Quotes based on Open-Ended Response

Theme	Definition	Illustrative Quotes
Fatigue	Mention of fatigue, burnout, or hesitancy related to overwork or overstimulation	"Generally, people (staff and patrons alike) seem to be 'Zoomed out'—that is, uninterested in attending programs virtually." —Public library, large
Program platform format	Format utilized to offer programming (e.g., in-person, hybrid, or virtual)	"Our programs went from all in-person before the pandemic, to all virtual during the height of the pandemic, to hybrid as we were coming out of the pandemic." —Public library, large "After a customer survey, adults stated that they wanted more in-person adult programming so we ... are offering more, but our attendance numbers don't quite match what the projected want was." —Public library, large

Changing wants for programming	Perceived changes to library programming desired by library patrons and efforts to identify patrons' changing wants	<p>"Patrons enjoy lectures but also want to experience personal engagement with the speaker, materials, etc. Using mixed media and having hands-on or interactive opportunities increase audience participation and enjoyment." —Public library, large</p> <p>"We get extremely positive feedback for the idea of programming (lots of advertising, etc.), but we don't see that play out in attendance." —Academic library, small</p>
Administrative effects	Mention of staffing, budget, imposed metrics, restrictions, and policies from institution or governing entities	"Our staff is smaller than it was before, so we aren't able to offer as many programs as we did before the pandemic." —Public library, large
Registration and attendance	Mention of usage of registration systems, registration numbers, or attendance numbers	"Registration for virtual sessions has increased since 2020; however, attendance has decreased overall." —Academic library, large
Community behavior	Mention of how library patrons are returning to library programming and spaces, or patron behavioral changes since the COVID-19 pandemic	<p>"We've noticed a decrease in social skills in in-person programming settings." —Public library, large</p> <p>"Students do not come to campus as much, and when they do ... less lingering or flexibility to do 'other' things." —Academic library, midsize</p>
Accessibility around programming	Mention of accessibility and accommodation services to library programming	<p>"Ability to have closed captioning is a plus with recorded events." —Public library, midsize</p> <p>"We rarely record our sessions, but during COVID we did and so we're wondering if students expect to watch a recording at a later date." —Academic library, large</p>
Experimenting with programming	Adaptation or changes implemented to programming to meet patron needs	"If someone has an idea, we just go with it! Experimentation is key." —Academic library, large
Marketing and outreach	Approaches library workers utilize to share, promote, and connect with library communities	<p>"A lot of people are attending things due to the social media postings of said event." —Public library, large</p> <p>"Email will sometimes be effective, but you have to send a lot of messages to get noticed." —Academic library, small</p>

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions in communities around the world. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how it impacted community needs and engagement with library programming from the perspective of library workers as well as how public and academic libraries are adapting to meet changing needs.

The study found metrics used to assess programming success have not changed notably since the pandemic, but the perception of the average amount of successful programming has. Some academic and public libraries reported no differences, whereas others reported increases and decreases to successful programming. Library workers who reported increases to successful programming mentioned virtual and hybrid options widening reach to audiences and improved accessibility, findings consistent with Parish and Bryant's (2025) public library case study. Library workers also mentioned benefits from forging partnerships during the pandemic and experimenting with programming. Libraries with reported decreases in successful programming noted high registration but low attendance, community behavioral changes, and limited staff capacity and budget.

In comparing the difference in success at the same institution before and since the pandemic, academic and public libraries had an average decrease. Approximately half of surveyed academic library workers noted an increase in program registrants but decrease in attendees. Although there was a perceived increase in virtual event preference for academic library communities, aligning with increased offerings of virtual and hybrid programming, this did not seem to translate to attendance rates but rather increased expectations for recordings of such events. An academic library worker commented, "Online things are easier to incorporate into [student] schedules but also easier to ignore and not follow through." As lockdown receded, there may have been a larger push for students to "catch up" on missed opportunities and overcommit. Though students are attracted to library programs, as indicated by increased registration, they may not have the capacity to attend day-of, due to other tasks or commitments as priorities. Library staff can learn from this by reframing registration forms to gauge expression of interest rather than guarantee of attendance, to gain a more realistic planning template.

Ponce et al. (2024) found that adults under age 65 noted negative economic impacts and decreased financial security related to the pandemic—possibly a contributing factor to increased interest in educational programming at academic libraries, as communities may need to develop skills and literacies beneficial for the job market. Increased success in "health and wellness" and "arts and leisure" programming could be linked to how COVID-19 social isolation had particular negative impacts on mental health, such as heightened anxiety and emotional distress (Arora et al., 2024; Ponce et al., 2024).

Academic and public library workers found that building partnerships and offering more hands-on, interactive, on-demand programming to be more effective in engaging communities than did passive learning (e.g., lectures) and programming requiring registration or scheduling on the patron's end. An academic library worker shared that their library planned on "offering shorter, more targeted programs ... more hybrid options."

A major takeaway on impact of the pandemic on library programming is the importance of experimentation. A public library worker shared, "COVID forced online innovation, but people wanted to return to public interactions—so in-person programming is key.... COVID gave us time to hone something we were already doing well and make it better so it could grow." They added that since the pandemic, "rather than asking for occasional feedback, almost every

program asks and receives feedback. This allows us to increase programs that work well for people and change things in programming [that] aren't working as well." As community needs change, it is important to meet patrons where they are and ensure adaptive programming approaches.

Limitations

Limited by the study's sample size, we were unable to draw conclusions that could be broadly applied to the public and academic library population. Despite this limitation, the results provide insight into observed phenomena, trends, and patterns in community engagement with library programming.

Conclusion

In this study, we used a survey approach to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic changed community engagement with library programming. Responses from library workers varied from noting increased engagement related to incorporation of digital platforms and partnerships to citing decreased engagement based on changing patron desires and administrative impacts. Each institution serves a community with unique interests, so no singular strategy assures meeting needs and wants of all patrons and community members. It is important for libraries to continue to experiment with programming as we continue with our "new normal."

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Appendix 1

Survey Questions

Demographic Questions

1. What best describes the type of library you work at?
 - Academic library
 - Public library
 - School library
 - Special library
 - Other (optional free response space)
2. In which country do you currently reside?
 - [Dropdown menu list of countries]
3. (If “United States of America” is selected) In which state or U.S. territory do you currently reside?
 - [Dropdown menu list of states and territories]
4. What is the approximate population size of the community your current library serves?
 - Less than 1,000
 - 1,000–5,000
 - 5,001–15,000
 - Over 15,000
5. Are you currently responsible for or do you help with programming at your current institution?
 - Yes
 - No

(We define programming as “any planned event which introduces the group attending to any of the broad range of library services or activities or which

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directly provides information to participants. Programs may cover use of the library, library services, or library tours. Programs may also provide cultural, recreational, or educational information, often designed to meet a specific social need" (IMLS, 2018b, p. 14)).

- 5.1. (If "yes" to 5) Were you responsible for or did you help with programming prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020)?
- Yes, at my current institution
 - Yes, but at a different institution
 - Yes, both at past institution(s) and my current institution
 - No
- 5.2. (If "no" to 5) Were you responsible for programming at a past institution?
- Yes
 - No
- 5.2.1 (If "yes" to 5.2) Please select when you were responsible for programming at a past institution.
- Prior to March 2020
 - After March 2020
 - Both prior to March 2020 and after March 2020

Pre-Pandemic Programming Questions

[For participants who respond "no" to 5 and "yes..." to 5.1, or "no" to 5 and "Prior to March 2020" to 5.2.1]

6. (If "Prior to March 2020" to 5.2.1) In this section, we are asking you to recall your experiences with library programming before the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020). If you helped with programming at multiple institutions before 2020, please pick one institution to focus on in this section.
- What best describes the library where you previously worked on programming?
- Academic library
 - Public Library
 - School library
 - Special library
 - Other (write in textbox)
- 6.1. (If "prior to March 2020" to 5.2.1) What was the approximate population size of the community the library served?
- Less than 1,000
 - 1,000–5,000
 - 5,001–15,000
 - Over 15,000
- 6.2. (If "prior to March 2020" to 5.2.1) When was your final year of employment at this institution?
- [Enter number]
7. What type of programming did you plan prior to March 2020? Please check all that apply.
- Arts and leisure (e.g., knitting, film discussion, gardening)
 - Book-related offerings (e.g., story hour, book clubs, author events)

- Career development (e.g., résumé writing workshop, job fair)
- Educational, nontechnical (e.g., information literacy, English as a second language)
- Educational, technical (e.g., introduction to Python, introduction to Microsoft Excel)
- Health and wellness (e.g., meditation classes, sexual education)
- Local interests and community (e.g., after-school teen hour, robotics club, local history)
- Other (optional free response space)

8. Which age groups represented your program audience prior to March 2020? Check all that apply.

- Early childhood–12
- 13–18
- 18–35
- 35–55
- 56+

9. What was your marketing strategy to promote programming/events? Check all that apply.

- Physical signage (e.g., flyers and posters)
- Digital signage (e.g., displayed on screens)
- Email
- Event calendar
- Newsletter
- Social media
- Word of mouth
- Other (optional free response space)

10. How would you describe your programming format prior to March 2020? Please check all that apply.

- In-person
- Virtual
- Hybrid

10.1. (If “virtual” and/or “hybrid” to 10) Prior to March 2020, did you track the number of virtual attendees?

- Yes
- No

10.1.1. (If “yes” to 12.1) In general, did the virtual option add a significant number to attendance?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

10.2. (If “virtual” and/or “hybrid” to 10) Did you provide recordings of programming?

- Yes
- No

10.2.1. (If “no” to 10.2) Did you get inquiries from patrons for recordings?

- Yes
- No

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- Not sure

11. Did you use a registration system for your programs/events?

- Yes
- No

11.1. (If “yes” to 11) Did most event attendees register prior to attending?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

11.2. (If “yes” to 11) On average, what were your expectations on the percentage of registrants who would attend?

- 81%–100% registrants
- 61%–80% registrants
- 41%–60% registrants
- 21%–40% registrants
- < 20% registrants
- Other (optional free response space)

11.2.1. (If there is a response to 11.2) How consistently did attendance meet those expectations?

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always
- Not sure

12. When assessing the success of a program/event you planned, how would you rate the importance of the following?

Attendance rate:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Registration rate:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Attendee participation (e.g., asking questions, active listening, etc.):

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Positive feedback from library community:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Topical/relevant to library community:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Other (optional free response space):

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

13. Prior to March 2020, approximately how many library programs/events did you participate in planning per year?

- Less than 10
- 10–20
- 21–30
- 31–50
- 51–100
- More than 100

14. On average, what percentage of your annual programming prior to March 2020 would you consider successful?

- [Enter number]

15. Rate the general success of your programming types. [Programming types auto-populated from answer to question 9, and participant will rate the success for each type.]

- Not successful at all
- Somewhat successful
- Moderately successful
- Successful
- Very successful

16. For your programming before March 2020, what were areas impacting the success of your programming? Please check all that apply.

- Marketing
- Lack of patron interest
- Low registration
- Low attendance
- Other (optional free response space)

17. Were you responsible for or did you help with programming after the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes
- No

Since the Pandemic Programming Questions

[For participants who respond “yes” to 5 and “no” to 5.1, or “no” to 5 and “after March 2020” to 5.2.1]

(If “after March 2020” to 5.2.1) In this section, recall your experiences with library programming since March 2020. If you helped with programming at multiple institutions before 2020, please pick one institution to focus on in this section.

18. What best describes the library where you previously worked on programming?

- Academic library
- Public library
- School library
- Special library
- Other (write in textbox)

18.1. (If “after March 2020” to 5.2.1) What was the approximate population size of the community the library served?

- Less than 1,000
- 1,000–5,000
- 5,001–15,000
- Over 15,000

18.2. (If “after March 2020” to 5.2.1) When was your final year of employment at this institution?

- [Enter number]

19. Since March 2020, what type of programming did you plan? Please check all that apply.

- Arts and leisure (e.g., knitting, film discussion, gardening)
- Book-related offerings (e.g., story hour, book clubs, author events)
- Career development (e.g., résumé writing workshop, job fair)
- Educational, nontechnical (e.g., information literacy, English as a second language)
- Educational, technical (e.g., introduction to Python, introduction to Microsoft Excel)
- Health and wellness (e.g., meditation classes, sexual education)
- Local interests and community (e.g., after-school teen hour, robotics club, local history)
- Other (optional free response space)

20. Which age groups represented your program audience since March 2020? Check all that apply.

- Early childhood–12
- 13–18
- 18–35
- 35–55
- 56+

21. What was your marketing strategy to promote programming/events? Check all that apply.

- Physical signage (e.g., flyers and posters)

- Digital signage (e.g., displayed on screens)
- Email
- Event calendar
- Newsletter
- Social media
- Word of mouth
- Other (optional free response space)

22. How would you describe your programming format since March 2020?

Please check all that apply.

- In-person
- Virtual
- Hybrid

22.1. (If “virtual” and/or “hybrid” to 22) Since March 2020, did you track the number of virtual attendees?

- Yes
- No

22.1.1. (If “yes” to 22.1) In general, did the virtual option add a significant number to attendance?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

22.2. (If “virtual” and/or “hybrid” to 22) Did you provide recordings of programming?

- Yes
- No

22.2.1. (If “no” to 22.2) Did you get inquiries from patrons for recordings?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

23. Did you use a registration system for your programs/events?

- Yes
- No

23.1. (If “yes” to 23) Did most event attendees register prior to attending?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

23.2. (If “yes” to 23) On average, what were your expectations on the percentage of registrants who would attend?

- 81%–100% registrants
- 61%–80% registrants
- 41%–60% registrants
- 21%–40% registrants
- < 20% registrants
- Other (optional free response space)

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23.2.1. (If there is a response to 23.2) How consistently did attendance meet those expectations?

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always
- Not sure

24. When assessing the success of a program/event you planned, how would you rate the importance of the following?

Attendance rate:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Registration rate:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Attendee participation (e.g., asking questions, active listening, etc.):

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Positive feedback from library community:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Topical/relevant to library community:

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

Other (optional free response space):

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Fairly important
- Important
- Very important

25. Since March 2020, approximately how many library programs/events did you participate in planning per year?

- Less than 10
- 10–20
- 21–30
- 31–50
- 51–100
- More than 100

26. On average, what percentage of your annual programming since March 2020 would you consider successful?

- [Enter number]

27. Rate the general success of your programming types. [Programming types auto-populated from answer to question 19, and participant will rate the success for each type.]

- Not successful at all
- Somewhat successful
- Moderately successful
- Successful
- Very successful

28. For your programming since March 2020, what were areas impacting the success of your programming? Please check all that apply.

- Marketing
- Lack of patron interest
- Low registration
- Low attendance
- Other (optional free response space)

29. Would you like to elaborate further on what you are seeing at your library and engagement since the pandemic?

- [Free response]

Both Pre-Pandemic and Since the Pandemic Programming Questions

[For participants who respond “yes” to 5 and “yes...” to 5.1, or “both prior and after March 2020” to 5.2.1]

30. (Displayed text if participant selects “yes, both at past institution(s) and my current institution” or “yes, at my current institution” to 5.1) In this section, recall your experiences with library programming at your current institution before the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020).

(Displayed text if participant selects “both prior and after March 2020” to 5.2.1) In this section, recall your experiences with library programming before the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020). If you helped with programming at multiple institutions before 2020, please pick one institution to focus on in this section.

Survey in this section displays questions 6–16 and 17–29.

General Pandemic Impact Perceptions Questions

Examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community engagement with library programming at academic and public libraries through a survey approach, *continued*

In this section, share how the pandemic may have impacted library engagement with community members based on your general perceptions and opinions. Please consider all programming at your library regardless of your involvement.

31. How has programming at your current institution changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

Positive feedback from patrons:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Negative feedback from patrons:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Number of registrants:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Number of attendees:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Number of in-person offerings:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Number of hybrid offerings:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Number of virtual offerings:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased

- Not applicable
- Not sure

Number of asynchronous offerings

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

Accessibility accommodations (e.g., closed captioning):

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not applicable
- Not sure

32. Which of the following, if any, were not offered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic? Please check all that apply.

- In-person offerings
- Hybrid offerings
- Virtual offerings
- Asynchronous offerings
- Event registration
- Event recordings
- Built-in accessibility accommodations
- Not sure

33. Have there been any other significant changes in programming at your current institution you would like to share or elaborate on?

- [Free response]

34. Do you think patron attitudes toward attending library programming have changed since the pandemic?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

34.1. (If “yes” or “not sure” to 34) What do you think has changed in patron attitudes toward library programming since the pandemic?

Patron interest in programming:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not sure
- Cannot answer

In-person attendance:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not sure
- Cannot answer

Examining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community engagement with library programming at academic and public libraries through a survey approach, *continued*

Virtual attendance:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not sure
- Cannot answer

Patrons preferring in-person events:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not sure
- Cannot answer

Patrons preferring virtual events:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not sure
- Cannot answer

Patrons requesting recordings of events:

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased
- Not sure
- Cannot answer

34.2. (If “yes” or “not sure” to 34) Have there been any changes in patron attitudes toward library programming not mentioned you would like to share?

- [Free response]

35. Are you aware of any efforts your library is making to increase program engagement? Please elaborate.

For this study, we define program engagement as the event’s/program’s ability to hold the attention of the attendee and encourage participation. This can include but is not limited to event attendance and participation (e.g., discussions, asking questions, and active listening).

- [Free response]

36. In your opinion, please elaborate on how effective the efforts you described in the previous question have been in encouraging program engagement.

- [Free response]

