

Friends of Wheatley Library

**COMMUNITY SURVEY
October – December 2015**

REPORT

January 2016

Introduction

The Friends of Wheatley Library (FOWL) is an independent voluntary group set up in December 2013 with the support of Oxfordshire County Council Library Service. Besides recruiting and organising volunteers to assist the regular staff of the Merry Bells Library, it aims to raise local awareness of what the library can offer, and to enhance the role it can play in the community. Among other initiatives, FOWL has set up its own website (www.wheatleylibrary.org), organised craft sessions and coffee mornings, and arranged talks from visiting speakers.

In 2015 the FOWL Committee agreed to carry out a community survey to gather the views of people in Wheatley and the surrounding villages about the services which the library can (or should, or might) provide, and also to gain some feeling for how the library was regarded by those who used it and those who didn't. We are very grateful to Wendy Stanton, the Library Manager, for joining us in preparing and carrying out the survey, and hope that its findings will contribute to the library's planning and activities in the coming months and years.

Gregory Walker

January 2016

Survey Design

The survey was carried out by means of a short questionnaire (two sides of an A4 sheet in hard copy). After some introductory text it asked these five questions, designed to encourage people to think about the library and its functions in several different ways:

1. Do you make any use of Wheatley Library? Yes/No
2. If No, please tell us why not. Can you suggest any changes which might encourage you to use the Library?
3. If Yes, please tell us what you use the Library for (followed by examples such as borrowing, children's activities, etc.).
4. Can you suggest anything new or different (e.g. in stock, services or events) which might make you or your family use the Library more?
5. Can you think of any particular groups of people within the local community which might be better served by the Library? If so, which and how?

Respondents were not asked for their name, but were invited to state their gender and their age (in one of six groups), and to say whether they lived in Wheatley village or, if not, where.

Survey Procedure

We had hoped to have the full questionnaire printed in the *Wheatley Newsletter*, which is distributed to every household in the village, but shortage of space there meant that we could only include a short announcement of the survey with information on where copies of the questionnaire could be obtained. The Holton and Waterperry newsletter offered us the same opportunity. Thanks to our webmaster Anne Rawlings we were able to allow respondents to reply online (which nearly 30 did). Paper copies were on offer at the Merry Bells library itself, besides which a number of shops, cafes, post offices, educational establishments and other sites in Wheatley and the

surrounding villages were approached and kindly agreed to stock copies for the period of the survey. In addition, committee members publicised the survey at meetings of local groups and societies. As a result, while coverage of the target area was less systematic than we had hoped, the returns suggest that we did succeed in reaching a fairly wide public, not only in Wheatley but also further afield, since responses came in from eight other villages.

The survey was launched at the beginning of October 2015, and the questionnaire carried a request for returns by the end of November. The few received after that deadline have been included in the results reported here.

The Response in Figures

The principal survey results which can be counted are as follows.

Number of questionnaires returned	111 (of which 29 online to the FOWL website)
Of which, declared library users	91 (82%)
Female / Male ratio of all replies	93/16 (85%/15%) (2 responses unstated)
Female / Male ratio of library users	77/14 (85%/15%)

Library users by age group:

0-10	2 (2%)
11-18	0
19-30	6 (7%)
31-45	25 (27%)
46-55	10 (11%)
56-65	12 (13%)
66+	35 (38%)
Unstated	1

Respondents by place of residence:

Wheatley (including Littleworth)	81 (73%)
Horspath	9 (8%)
Cuddesdon	9 (8%)
Great Milton	3
Great Haseley	2
Denton	1
Garsington	1
Holton	1
Stanton St John	1
Headington	1

In addition, one respondent lived in Towersey (9 miles away) but worked in Wheatley, and another lived 'out of the immediate area' but came in for reading group meetings.

Asked about the purposes for which they used the library, the 91 'Yes' respondents mentioned the following:

Borrowing books or other materials	86
Finding local information	21
Children's activities	17
Photocopying or scanning	15
Reading newspapers / magazines	9
Using computers	8
Craft Group	6
Using online reference services	5
Family/local history	2

The number of responses is too small for the results to be representative in any statistical sense. The total population of Wheatley and the eight other villages from which replies were received is about 10,000 – of whom 4,000 live in Wheatley itself. It's also quite possible that the high proportion of female respondents (85%) and of people over 65 (38%) is due to the necessarily uneven availability of the questionnaires as described in 'Survey Procedure' above.

However, the principal value of the survey results lies elsewhere. As described in 'Survey Design' above, we deliberately set out to encourage people to tell us in their own words what they thought of the library and of what it could do for them and the local community. We've been pleased to find that 85 of the 111 returns (77%) included notes and comments, voicing a wide variety of opinions and concerns, and these are summarised and highlighted in the sections below. Quite understandably, some respondents weren't aware of all the services that the library offers, and/or of the constraints of space and funding under which it operates. However, we have felt it important to show the full range of responses.

Numbers in the following sections refer to the individual returns listed in the full results of the survey shown at the end of this report.

Library Stock and Resources

More than on any other topic, respondents had comments to make about the materials which the library held – or might hold – in its own stock, or to which it could give access. There were many requests in general terms for a larger selection of recently-published books and/or DVDs (11, 25, 31, 34, 36, 45, 46, 52, 58, 60, 63, 110). Plenty of users noted specific genres or subjects that they would like to see better represented: children's and teenage literature (11, 23, 32, 35, 54, 70), modern and classic literature (60, 64), poetry (34, 79), crafts (36, 37), readers for language students (104), science fiction and travel (111). Broader categories mentioned included 'high-quality literature' (46) and 'serious subjects (i.e. not gardening, cooking etc.)' (38). Several people asked for better online access to e-books (29, 52, 73).

Provision for Children and Young People

Responses had much to say about how the Library should cater for children, teenagers and younger people generally. Besides many comments on appropriate bookstock (noted above), there were a number of calls for more outreach to children (1, 3, 23, 41, 59, 80, 98) and in some cases specifically for more attention to teenagers and beyond (11, 20, 32, 35, 54, 81, 89, 95). Thanks and praise for the library's present services sometimes referred specifically to its work with children (2, 12, 59, 96).

Links with Schools

Several responses drew attention to the importance of cultivating the library's relationship with local schools (23, 35, 49, 53, 66, 81, 89).

Provision for the Elderly and Disadvantaged

Clearly a concern for many people. Some responses emphasised the special importance of the library's services to the elderly, and to the disabled and housebound (who may be of any age) (9, 33, 34, 47, 52, 56, 72, 87, 97). This was sometimes linked to parking and other access problems (42, 43, 67, 96, 106, 108). Attention was also drawn to other disadvantaged groups such as those who live in remoter locations (106), who are unemployed, or who are doing unpaid work (52). One reply noted the help available for older people trying to access the internet (72).

The Library as a Social Centre

The library's role as one of the social centres in the village attracted some comment, e.g. 'a great community hub for promoting local activities' (14). Several respondents would like to see some form of catering such as a coffee machine (7, 70, 79, 88), to help make a session in the library 'more of a "visit"' (87). It was also pointed out that: 'Especially elderly and isolated people come not just for the books but for personal contact' (107). Some suggested enhancing the library's social role by using its premises for more small-scale meetings and events (7, 18, 79).

Opening Hours

Longer and/or different opening hours figured in a number of responses, most of them asking either for more evening opening to help those busy during the day (12, 27, 28, 46, 88), or for daytime hours that allowed more activities with children (59, 95).

Publicity

There were a number of calls for the library to improve the publicity it gives to its services, opening hours and events (47, 54, 72, 93, 94, 108).

Non-Users

Of particular interest were the comments from 16 of the 20 people who declared themselves to be non-users of the Merry Bells library. They fell into several categories. There were those who felt they were self-sufficient, often using electronic media: 'I have a huge number of books at home which I've yet to read!' (68); 'I buy books and borrow them from friends' (74); 'Like to own the books I read – Kindle!' (78, also 89, 97); 'It is easier to buy books from Amazon' (87, also 106); 'Find libraries scary. Use technology for reading books (iPhone)' (88). Then there were those who, for various reasons, used other libraries (97, 110); those recently arrived in the area (73, 80); those who stopped when their children grew older (81); those who couldn't find the time (18, 71, 76); and those who 'never know when it's open' (93).

Thanks and Praise

Lastly, but very importantly, we found that respondents often took this opportunity to say how important and enjoyable the library was for them and their families, and how much they appreciated the staff, e.g. 'we would like to say the staff are always so helpful' (12); 'I use the library at Wheatley because the staff are excellent!' (66); 'We love the library and use it lots' (96); 'Would be a great loss to lose it' (105 – this from a non-user).

RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY SURVEY

Note

Except for my own notes in square brackets, comments generally give the respondents' own words, edited or paraphrased occasionally. I have quoted them as fully as possible, even where it seems that the respondent isn't aware of the real scope of the library's services and/or of the limitations under which it works. The original returns have been kept for reference.

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Age column

The age ranges offered were: 0-10 11-18 19-30 31-45 46-55 56-65 66 and over.

Location column

CU – Cuddesdon DN – Denton GA – Garsington GH – Great Haseley
GM – Great Milton HN – Holton HP – Horspath SJ – Stanton St John WH – Wheatley

Use Made column

BB – borrowing books or other materials
CA – children's activities
FI – finding local information
NP – reading newspapers and magazines
OR – using online reference services
PH – photocopying or scanning
UC – using computer

No.	Use? Y/N	Sex	Age	Locn	Use Made	Comments
1	Y	F	-10	HP	BB/CA/ Craft	[?parent on behalf of child.] Should have a particular part of the building for suggesting books for your children. Craft Group could create a section for beginners.
2	Y	F	-30	WH	BB/CA	Enjoyed story time session in conjunction with maple tree over the summer hols. Very good!
3	Y	F	-45	WH	BB/UC	Maybe a baby and toddler group to encourage the younger reader.
4	Y	F	-30	WH	BB/CA	
5	Y	F	-45	WH	BB/CA/FI	
6	Y	F	-10	WH	BB/CA	
7	Y	M	-45	DN	BB/CA	A comfortable silent reading area with a coffee machine? Would have liked to use the library on Sun mornings for a youth discussion group.
8	Y	F	-55	WH	BB	
9	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	Maybe more attention to lonely older people?
10	Y	F	-55	WH	BB/PH	
11	Y	F	-45	WH	BB/CA	Need new award-winning books / award-winning section of contemporary fiction. ?Better serve teenagers and 7-12s not interested in Rhyme Time.
12	Y	F	-45	WH	BB/CA	Use it regularly and wd like to say the staff are always so helpful. ?Better serve working mums not around in the day.
13	Y	M	-45	WH	BB/CA	From personal p.o.v. I like non-fiction but it can be ordered from other libraries.

14	Y	F	-55	WH	BB	Library is a great community hub for promoting local activities, e.g. the local Choral Soc. V. pleased to use it as a delivery point from the Central Music Lib.
15	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	Only use library very occasionally.
16	Y	M	--	WH	BB/FI	
17	Y	F	-45	WH	BB/UC/FI	
18	N	F	-65	WH		Intend to join when have more free time. Used to be a member. ?rent out premises to small community groups.
19	Y	F	-45	GM	BB/CA	
20	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	Activities for 11-15s would be good: only seem to be geared towards younger children.
21	Y	F	-55	WH	BB	
22	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	
23	N	F	-45	WH		More activities aimed at 6-12 yr olds. ?Tie stock into local schools' topics/themes.
24	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	
25	Y	F	-55	WH	BB	Need to change the books as often as possible.
26	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	
27	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	?open later on a Sat or maybe an hour 6-7 on 1 week night. I sometimes struggle to do clubs and work and get to the library!
28	N	F	-45	HP		Not open for long enough hours.
29	Y	M	-45	WH	FI	?need online hiring of books – downloadable, time-limited service to download books to read on mobile/computer devices like Kindle, iPad etc.
30	Y	M	66+	WH	BB/FI	
31	Y	F	-65	WH	BB	Need more newly-published titles available on the shelf (i.e. at no cost) and longer opening hours.
32	Y	F	-65	WH	BB	Also use Thame Library. ?need a larger teenage section.
33	Y	F	-65	WH	BB	Also uses home library service. Need more delivery people for the housebound.
34	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	Would like more poetry. Expand home library service.
35	Y	F	-30	WH	BB	Volunteer. Should have more advertising and take part in local events. Need to see more teens and young adults. ?a larger education section, and teen/YA fiction section.
36	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/PH/ NP/FI	Would like bigger selection of craft books and more collections of contemporary books.
37	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/FI	More craft books: tatting, bobbin lace making, crochet.
38	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	I borrow 'crime' type books for bedtime reading, use Central Lib for most loans (non-fiction). Would like wider variety of non-fiction on serious subjects (i.e. not Gardening, Cooking etc).
39	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	Should have a section with all the historical novels in.
40	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	
41	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	Mainly borrow children's books. Would love toddler/ children's activities on a Saturday.
42	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	Also Craft Group. Need more parking.
43	Y	F	-65	WH	Craft Grp	Parking difficult for the less able, esp. when Library spaces occupied by non-lib users.
44	Y	F	-65	WH	BB	Also Craft Group.
45	Y	F	66+	GM	BB	Need more lending book stock.
46	Y	F	-65	GM	BB/UC/ PH	Need more high-qual literature and u-t-d computers. Some evening opening hours would help us use the library more.
47	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/FI	Infrequent user. I often order books online. Need more reminding of events. Confused about opening times. More help for those who can't walk or drive. A transport service?
48	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	Have used the library since the 1950s!

49	Y	F	-65	WH	BB	Have a Wheatley Library display at the Primary School?
50	Y	F	-65	→	Craft Grp	Live in Headington.
51	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/NP	
52	Y	F	-55	WH	BB/FI/ OR/PH/ NP	Also use for local history. Lobby area v. useful. Need greater selection of e-books; bulletin of recent books + staff reviews/recommendations; more non-fiction. Could better serve those out of work, needing work, looking for alternatives to paid work, volunteering or internships, and physical or mental disabilities. Everything seems to be about kids!
53	Y	F	-45	WH	BB	More book clubs? School trips to library? Special events for schools.
54	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/PH/ NP/FI	Should publicise Lively Library club more. Offer to come as speakers to local organisations – many meet in the daytime. How can you attract older children? Am 4 th generation Wheatley resident. [+ reminiscences]
55	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/PH	Also Craft Group.
56	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	St Mary's Close flats – several living there are housebound.
57	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/PH	
58	Y	M	66+	WH	BB/UC/ OR	Need better stock of latest books.
59	Y	F	-45	HN	BB	Usually go with children (3 & 5) – nice thing to do. I'd love to see a good old-fashioned reading scheme for kids over the summer hols with a party at the end! (Have a dress-up event?) Nothing on Thurs and Fri for kids in Wheatley. Open Thurs a.m. with a story session and you'll get visitors. Please take the felt tips away! Crayons are fine.
60	Y	F	-65	WH	BB	Should have more speakers. Keep u-t-d with really good quality books for all ages, including modern and classic lit.
61	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/FI/ UC	Need more events and speakers, and good stock.
62	Y	M	66+	WH	BB/FI	Also use Which? reports.
63	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/NP	Also use online catalogue. Apparently no new DVDs supplied to smaller libraries. Searched for 8 titles today and found none in stock here. So do I go elsewhere?
64	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	Should highlight topical or local interest books. Would like to read more <i>classics</i> , i.e. English lit. mainly.
65	Y	F	66+	WH	PH	Use computer for family history.
66	Y	F	-55	GH	BB	I use the library at Wheatley because the staff are excellent! Need more newer DVDs. ?do more for special schools / all schools.
67	Y	F	-30	GH	BB/OR	Make it better for disabled.
68	N	F	66+	WH		I have a huge number of books at home that I've yet to read! When/if I have grandchildren, will probably use for children's books.
69	Y	F	-65	WH	BB/FI	
70	Y	M	66+	WH	BB	?Coffee machine. More young-people types of books.
71	N	F	66+	WH		Borrow books through a book club – not much time for other reading.
72	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/FI	A daytime book club? Publicise help available for older people trying to access the internet.
73	N	F	66+	WH		Just back from Australia. ?have talks in the evening or daytime when the library is closed. Can you download books from your collection as you borrow books?
74	N	--	66+	CU		I buy books and borrow them from friends.
75	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/UC	
76	N	F	66+	WH		Full of good intentions but very busy.
77	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	
78	N	F	66+	WH		Used when own children were young – like to own the books I read. KINDLE!
79	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	Would like more poetry books and coffee/tea facilities. Use the venue for talks – infinitely better venue than the Merry Bells!
80	N	F	-45	SJ		Recently joined Oxon libraries, no opportunity to try Wheatley yet.

						Regular rhymetime session for children would guarantee a visit!
81	N	F	-55	WH		Out of the habit, no longer go with the children (grown up). Arrange school holiday initiatives for (older) teenagers.
82	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/UC/ PH/FI	Would like tuition in use of photocopier/scanner – and (pipe dream) in photo and video editing!
83	Y	F	66+	WH	BB/PH NP/FI	Have talks about new books.
84	Y	F	66+	→	Rdg Grp	Moved out of immediate area but come for Reading Group evening meetings.
85	Y	M	66+	WH	BB/CA	Occasionally come to children's events with grandchildren.
86	Y	F	-65	WH	BB/FI	
87	N	F	-65	GA		It is easier to buy books from Amazon. ?reach out more to those isolated or without transport/IT. Make more of a 'visit' so coffee and papers etc.
88	N	F	-55	WH		Find libraries scary. Use technology for reading books (iPhone) and watching films. ?evening opening, food/café.
89	N	F	-55	WH		Download books to a Kindle. Access internet for news etc on phone. May use printer/copying. Children in Wheatley Nursery School may be interested in coming to library if parking available for minibus.
90	Y	M	-45	WH	BB/CA	Children also use for borrowing and activities.
91	Y	M	66+	WH	BB	
92	Y	F	66+	WH	BB	
93	N	F	-45	WH		Never know when it's open and when activities for young children are on. I have a library card for me and my daughter but have never used it. ?a leaflet of opening times etc.
94	Y	F	66+	WH	PH/FI	Also as a place to read. ?leaflets with library opening hours – always find hard to remember. Sorry if I've missed them.
95	Y	F	-30	WH	BB	Borrow children's books. Need more children's groups for preschool age. Mon 11.30 or Thurs 9.30.
96	Y	F	-45	CU	BB/CA/ NP/FI	Also for using catalogue. We love the library and use it lots. Disabled and buggy access could be better.
97	N	F	-45	CU		Don't have time, have a library at college. Kindle and Amazon – ease of access. Events for mothers/toddlers and elderly.
98	Y	F	-45	CU	BB/CA/ NP	Would like more children's activities.
99	Y	M	-45	CU	BB	
100	Y	M	-30	CU	BB/CA	
101	Y	F	-55	CU	BB	
102	Y	F	-45	CU	UC/OR/ PH/CA/ NP/FI	
103	N	M	-45	CU		Transport issues. More provision for students?
104	Y	F	-55	→	BB	Live in Towersey, work in Wheatley. ?provide sets of graded readers for language students.
105	N	M	66+	HP		Not thought to use it. Would be a great loss to lose it.
106	N	F	66+	HP		So easy to get cheap books online. Getting to Wheatley difficult if we lose bus service. Reach out to people in country districts.
107	Y	F	66+	HP	BB	Also use Horspath mobile library. Especially elderly and isolated people come not just for the books but for personal contact, which has lessened since introduction of DIY check-in and out.
108	Y	F	-55	HP	BB/OR/ PH/FI	[also age of 66+, ?= 2 people]. More publicity and easier parking.
109	N	--	--	HP?		
110	N	F	-55	HP		Use Cowley library – good range of DVDs.
111	Y	M	66+	HP	BB	Would like more sci fi and travel books.