

Michigan Cooperative Directors Association
Research Survey-Cooperative Members
Final Report
December 14, 2011

Background

Library funding in the State of Michigan continues to be a significant challenge. Libraries around the state are now and will be in greater financial jeopardy than in any time in recent memory due to the economic downturn, the collapse of the housing market and the resulting reduced levels of property assessments. This, of course, leads to reduced revenues available for public libraries which are primarily funded by property millages in the community they serve.

Smaller libraries may be particularly hard hit and these are often members of Library Cooperatives which are also financially in jeopardy. Legislators and government administration officials, looking for budget cuts wherever possible believe Library Cooperatives are expendable and are looking to eliminate funding for these organizations. Without a solid understanding of the level of support that libraries have for the Cooperatives and the value they provide, there is a good chance funding for the Cooperatives may be eliminated.

Situation

Given the argument that Cooperatives are not providing essential services to the libraries they serve government funders may decide to eliminate all funding for Library Cooperatives. Objective data demonstrating the value of the Cooperatives to the member libraries which is both scientifically collected and analyzed will be important to demonstrate the validity of the premise that Library Cooperatives in Michigan continue to have relevance and serve as important assets to individual member libraries.

Proposal

A research study covering libraries served by Library Cooperatives was approved to be conducted to objectively assess the perceived value of the Cooperative, key strengths, an assessment of what services are most valued, what gaps exist and how the Cooperative may better serve their members.

Target and Scope of the Survey:

The target audience was Directors or Senior staff member of every Library in the State of Michigan that is a member of a Library Cooperative.

The scope will include an understanding of the services provided to the Library by the Cooperative, the savings in time and money realized by the Library as a result of their membership in the Cooperative, views and attitudes regarding Library management regarding the role of the Cooperative in serving the Library community, the value of other services provided (i. e. consultation, training, technical assistance, etc.) as well as side benefits to include networking, using the Cooperative as communications and help “network”, etc.

Additionally, there will be questions in the survey which provide an understanding of the Library’s class size, staffing, technical capabilities, growth trends, funding challenges, etc.

The approved survey included a total of 33 questions. There are 28 forced choice questions and 5 open-ended questions.

Method:

Because of the high level of computer literacy and comfort with computers and to expedite the conduct of the survey, it was agreed to post the survey online. To save costs and provide quick response opportunities, it is recommended this survey be conducted online via SurveyGizmo. WJSchroer has an upgraded account with this vendor and the survey was developed at the appropriate length with the questions and opportunity for comment in “open-ended” questions needed for more advanced surveys of this type.

Timing:

The survey was conducted between November 3 and November 18. A total of 250 completed surveys were returned. This reflects a relatively high return rate and this plurality response rate yields a high statistical confidence interval in the results of the survey.

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Management Summary

There was a positive participation in this study with almost 65% of the Cooperative membership participating. There was a good cross-section of members participating as well with representation from all classes of Libraries represented. While the sample size is quite robust as a proportion of the universe (total of 384 libraries) when broken into 6 unequal parts (Class size) or 9 unequal parts (Cooperative membership) the numbers are often too small to provide statistically significant results by class size or membership. Wherever possible we do indicate statistically significant results and also indicate trend lines or “tendencies” which may not be statistically significant at a high confidence interval but to bear watching and may suggest more than a casual relationship.

Interestingly, all Library Cooperatives are seen as not alike and as noted in the report, some are comprised of a mix of library class sizes while others are made up of mostly larger...or mostly smaller libraries.

This suggests that Library Cooperatives in Michigan may have difficulty comparing themselves to each other or establishing some universal rules, guidelines, processes or other standardized approaches because, fundamentally, they are made up of some very different size libraries with some very different needs and interests.

In spite of these differences there are some common findings in the report... one of which is an extremely high level of concurrence regarding the 90% “about right” score attributed to the “level of communications” received by library members from the Cooperatives.

This high level of endorsement by a strong majority of members would suggest the current schedule for communicating with libraries by the Cooperatives is appropriate and reflects current demand of the members.

Additionally, respondents provided a similar high score regarding the communication of important or “need to know” communications. Again, the strong showing, seen across the board by respondents from different class size libraries suggest an overall satisfaction with the content of Cooperative communications.

While respondents also agreed overall the opportunity for input was high, smaller libraries emphasized this more than larger class size libraries did. **While the finding may not be statistically significant the trendline appears clear and this finding may suggest some additional dialogue with larger library staff to determine how further input may be provided to the Cooperatives.**

The plurality of respondents could not suggest what else the Cooperatives could do to keep members more informed. Based on earlier scores it does not appear that is an area of concern for most respondents. The verbatim responses tend to reinforce this conclusion with comments suggesting a relatively high level of satisfaction with current Cooperative efforts in this area.

It may be incumbent upon the Cooperatives to experiment with different delivery mechanisms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Google Calendar or other techniques such as an e-zine to determine what additionally the Cooperatives might do to keep members up to date with latest relevant library information.

Quality of training and effectiveness of training received a B+score of 5.58/ 5.71 out of 7.0. While members appear generally satisfied it appears larger libraries may be somewhat less satisfied. This was especially noted when analyzing satisfaction levels by FTE size. While not statistically significant the trend would suggest a lower level of satisfaction with larger libraries (libraries with more FTEs) on this issue. There were also some differences by Cooperative, however, the confidence level on these differences is not adequate to suggest a meaningful trend. **Additional dialogue or follow up research with members and especially with the larger library members specifically regarding quality and effectiveness of training may be helpful.**

As noted in the text, there is a high positive correlation between opportunity for input and satisfaction with training. **This suggests insuring all Cooperative members have adequate input (and feedback) regarding training to increase the opportunity for satisfaction in the selection and provision of training opportunities.**

Respondents provided suggestions for improvements to training including the “number of offerings” and “webinars”. Other suggestions include developing a database of presenters that libraries could hire for in-service days and more iterations of training. While there are practical problems providing multiple iterations of training there may be opportunities for responding to member concerns. **Because training appears to be a significant concern for members the development of (if it doesn’t exist now) a Training subcommittee made up of member and Cooperative staff could be helpful in providing some creative solutions.**

Respondents offered suggestions for training topics including several mentions of “Customer Service”. **Perhaps importantly, a mechanism to encourage the ongoing input of members regarding training topics (part of the Training subcommittee agenda?) appears to be something that would be helpful to guide the training content of the Cooperatives.**

The top valued services are the Delivery/RIDES and the “group purchases of databases” and “advocacy” followed by “continuing education”. Least valued services include Web Hosting and research/ development. **These scores are largely reinforced when “Services willing to pay for” scores are reviewed. While there are some differences the same top three services appear in the services one would most be willing to pay for.**

While there are some differences by Class Size or Cooperative membership, the strength of these scores and preferences largely transcend Class Size or Membership.

The delivery of materials questions provided insight which suggests a number of libraries are receiving materials less often than may be desired. **The most frequent requested change was libraries with 2 per week deliveries going to 3 per week. For the most part larger libraries**

wanted more deliveries per week, but this was not a universal finding and it does depend on the library. There was even a marginal increase in the number of libraries wishing to go to 5 deliveries per week.

Respondents endorsed the overall value of Cooperatives with almost ½ scoring the Cooperatives as a “Very High Value” and another 37% scoring a “High Value”. Perceived effectiveness of training is highly correlated with perceived value of the Cooperative and the smaller libraries were more likely to also rate the Cooperatives highly.

Consideration may be given to heightening perceived effectiveness of training as a tool for increasing perceived value and focusing on the needs of larger libraries to insure the Cooperatives are providing meeting the expectations held by the larger library members of the Cooperatives.

There is not a consensus on the application of all State Aid dedicated to Cooperatives alone. As noted in the text there are mixed views. Some libraries are more dependent on the State Aid than others...and many are concerned about the economy and more potential downside. **It does appear a majority of the Library members could support the proposal if there was a clear demonstration the Cooperatives could provide as much or more value of the State Aid being requested back to the member libraries. In effect, if the Cooperatives could demonstrate a \$1.50 worth of demanded value for every \$1 in State Aid members give up, there is an opportunity for the membership to consider the proposal seriously.**

The Cooperatives are seen as a “reliable source” for best practices and for Library News and Issues by ¾ of respondents. There is some difference by Class Size with larger libraries scoring the Cooperatives somewhat lower. There is a positive correlation between the amount of communications and the score received regarding perception as a reliable source. The Cooperatives are seen as somewhat less of a source for Library Finance Information.

Continued emphasis on communications and dialoguing with larger libraries to better understand any special needs they may have regarding best practices are recommended. Additionally, the Cooperatives may want to build more robustness into their Library Finance information to encourage the continued perception of the Cooperatives as reliable sources for best practice.

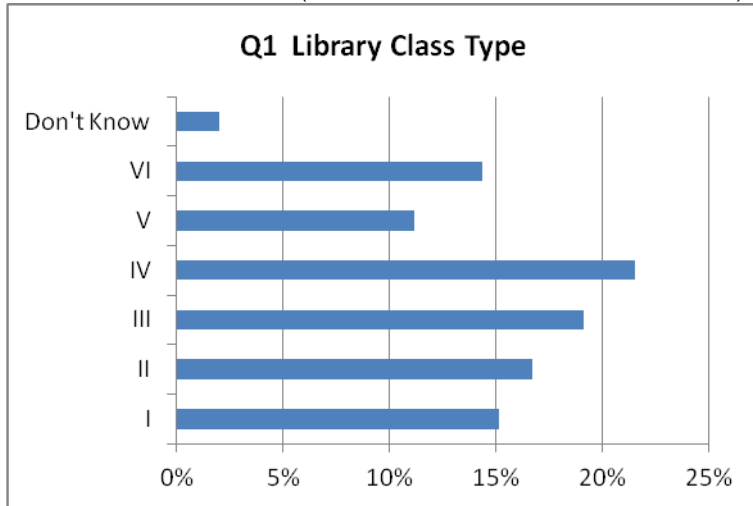
The future direction for Cooperatives is seen as somewhat different by most respondents with an emphasis on technology/support, discounts, advocacy and training leading the way. Marketing and consulting are less valued...perhaps because of the need for those services to be so tightly configured around the circumstances of the individual library. There are some differences by Class Size but these are differences between preference among the top choices noted above. In effect, these areas do appear to be the consensus areas of preference for the Cooperatives for the near to mid term as seen by Cooperative members.

In summary, this report suggests Cooperatives are doing a number of things right. Their level of communications, quality of communications and training and other aspects of the service delivery focus are highly rated and valued. There do exist opportunities for training changes in delivery and content as well as opportunities for input...especially with larger size members. Although members appear satisfied with communications content and delivery it may be incumbent upon the Cooperatives to continue to find new approaches which respond even more favorably to member needs. Training content is an opportunity and mechanisms which encourage a greater dialogue between the Cooperatives and members is encouraged. Training suggestions for improvement must be mediated by cost efficiency and effectiveness and the delegation of some of the suggested ideas to a special committee may facilitate progress. There are some clear preferences for some services and some services appear clearly unnecessary and not desired. Using the information contained here to trim unneeded services will allow the Cooperatives to better allocate resources to what members demand most. There is an opportunity for shifting the frequency of materials to selected libraries and that flexibility appears to be key to meeting specific member needs. The State Aid question is a challenge but there appears room for additional discussion and demonstration by the Cooperatives of how such a proposal might make sense for the greatest majority of members. Overall, the Cooperatives are highly valued service providers serving as a reliable source and providing demanded services. With continued attention to the differences in member needs, remaining flexible regarding the look and feel of services in the future and retaining a service orientation Cooperatives may continue to be seen and viewed as an integral and valued part of the Library services delivery spectrum in Michigan.

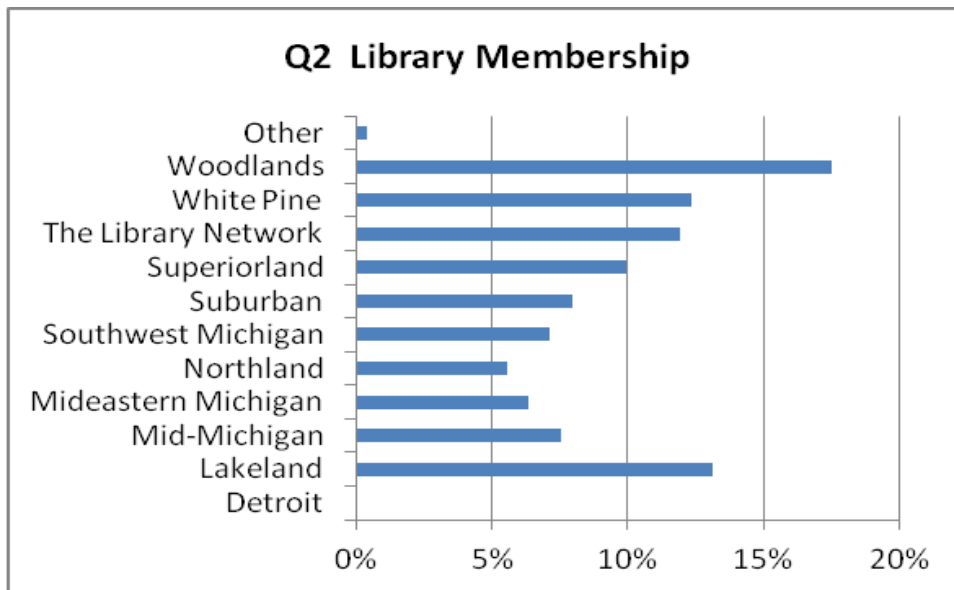
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Detail Findings

The response rate included strong representation from all class sizes of libraries with the plurality response (22%) coming from Class IV libraries. However, of the six library class sizes four yielded participation rates of 15% or higher. Only Class V and VI libraries were represented at less than a 15% rate (Class V=12%/ Class VI =13%) (Chart Q1)

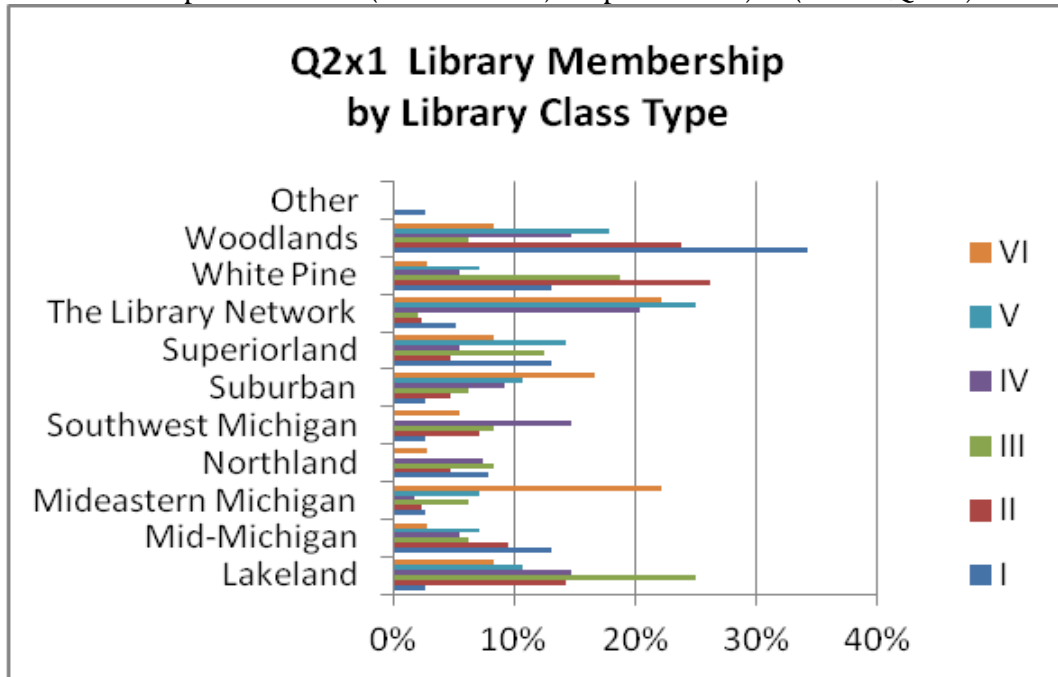


Similarly, there was solid representation from the nine Library Cooperative participating in the survey. Woodlands provided the highest number of responses as a percentage of the total field (18%) but four other Cooperative included 10% of the responses or more (White Pine, Library Network, Superiorland and Lakeland. (Chart Q2)



When considering Library budget, materials budget and FTEs there was (unsurprisingly) a high correlation between class size of the Library and the size of those budgets/ FTE levels (Charts Q1x30, 1x32, 1x33)

Interestingly, there is a diversity of Library class sizes by Co-op represented. Each Co-op reports diversity in Library Class type although some Cooperative yield greater representation from larger libraries (Library Network and Southwest Michigan), while others have a majority of smaller class size Libraries (White Pine, Mid-Michigan, Lakeland) while still others have something of a balance in representation (Woodlands, Superiorland). (ChartQ2x1)

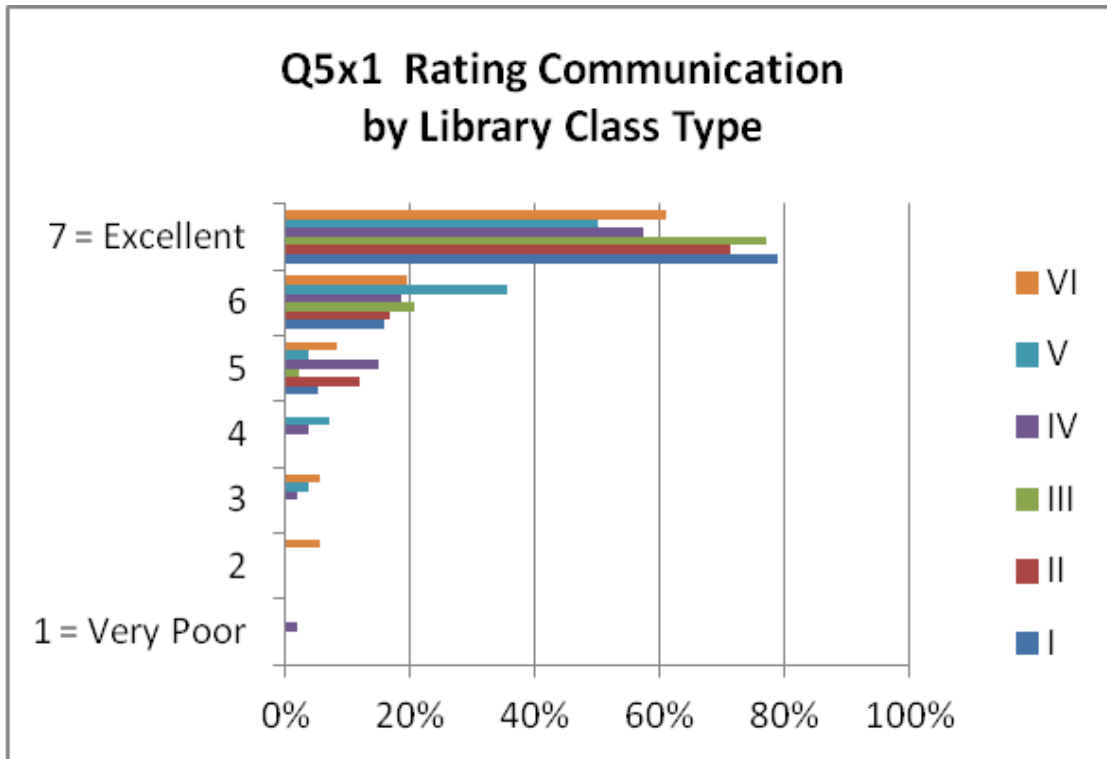


Over 90% of respondents believe they are receiving “about the right amount of (frequency) communications. (Q. 3) This extremely high finding showed little variation by Class Type with only one class of library citing more than 10% finding of “not (frequent) enough” (Class V). Only a small percentage (6%) of libraries in Class VI suggested “too often” but that was about the same number of Class VI libraries which reported “not enough”. By Co-Op most of the Cooperative also cited “about right”, while about 1/4 of Mid-Michigan representatives were more likely to say “not enough” (Q3x2).

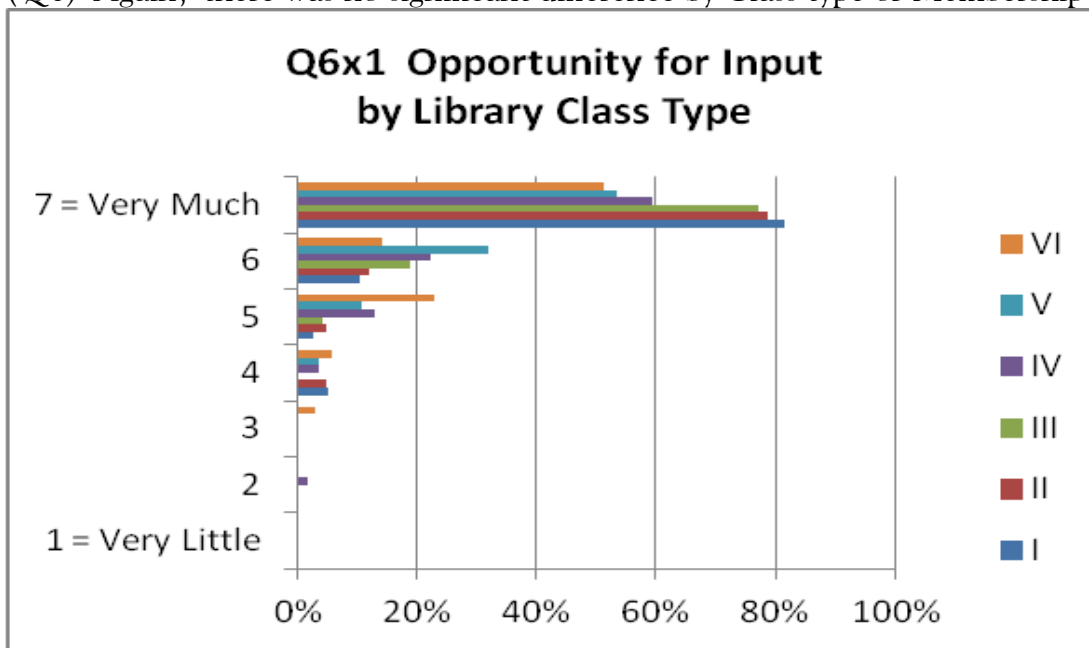
When asked to elaborate respondents provided detailed statements regarding the timeliness, relevancy and helpfulness of Co-Op communications (Q4) These are detailed in the tables portion of the report but the overwhelming number of statements was positive and a typical response is listed below:

My Cooperative is very, very good about keeping the members libraries up-to-date on anything happening in the library community.

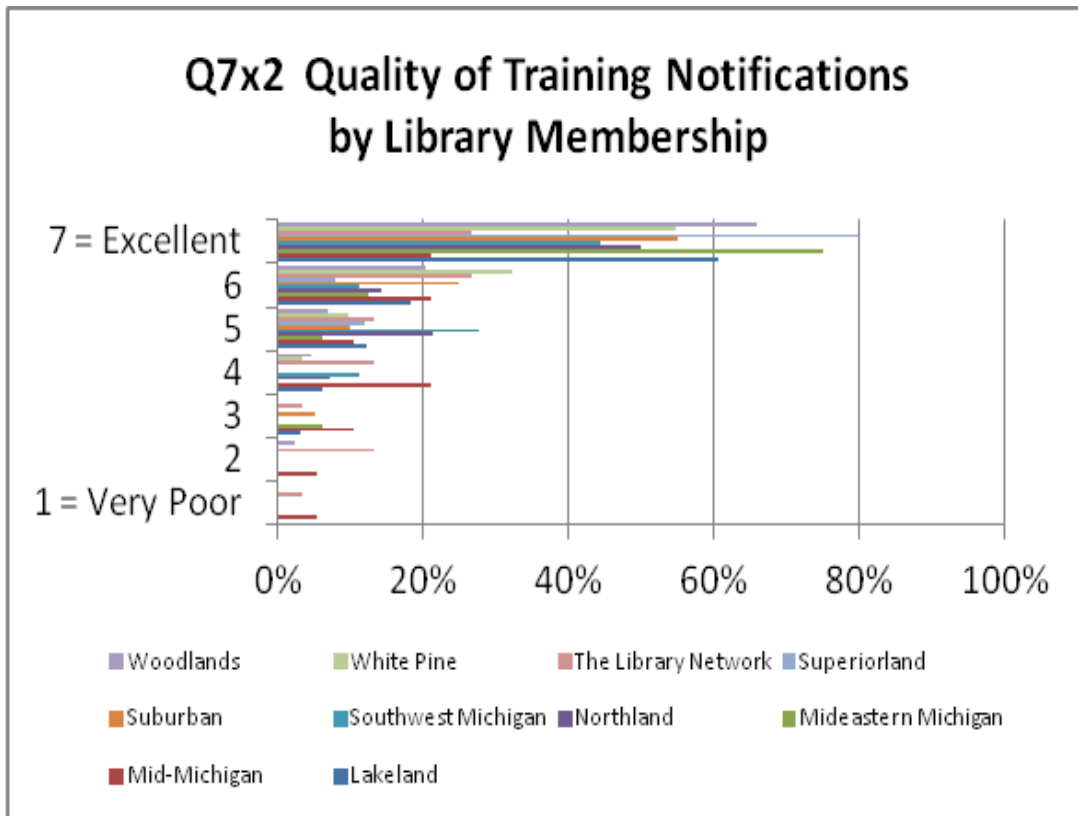
From a ratings standpoint, almost 2/3 of respondents rated Co-Op communications at a “7” out of “7”. Approximately 20% rated the communications a “6”. Fewer than 10% of responses rated communications at a “4” or less. The mean score for the table was 6.43 out of a possible 7.0 (Q5) There was no significant difference in the responses by Library Class type or by Co-Op membership. (Q5x1)



When asked how much input Co-Op members have for input relating to programs or services 68% cited a “7” out of a possible 7.0 (“Very Much”) Another 19% rated this question a “6” and 10% provided a “5”. Fewer than 10% of all respondents rated this question at a 4 or lower. (Q6) Again, there was no significant difference by Class type or Membership (Q6x1, Q6x2)



The “quality of training notifications” was rated at a “7” out of 7.0 by 58% of respondents. Another 21% rated this issue at a “6” and 12% rated it at a “5”. Approximately 14% rated this issue at a “4” or lower. (Q7) Again, there appeared to be no significant differences by Class type or Membership (Q7x1, 7x2)



When asked what “additionally” or “differently” the Cooperative could do to keep its members more informed the plurality of respondents (44%) were “unsure”. Another 25% made “other” suggestions. 64 verbatim responses are itemized in the Tables section but typical responses included:

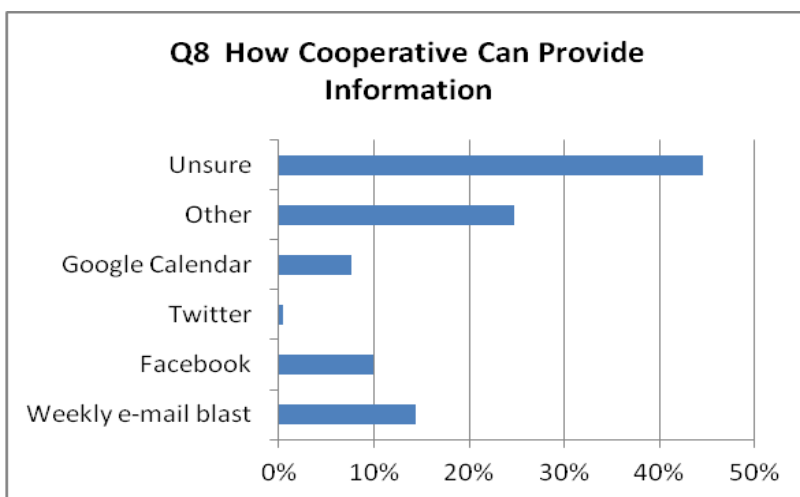
I feel everything is handled quite well now.

Nothing additional - communication is ok

Really just a better job of Steering Committee communicating what it's topics are and engaging the members for feedback.

I am as informed as I can get and don't use Facebook or Twitter

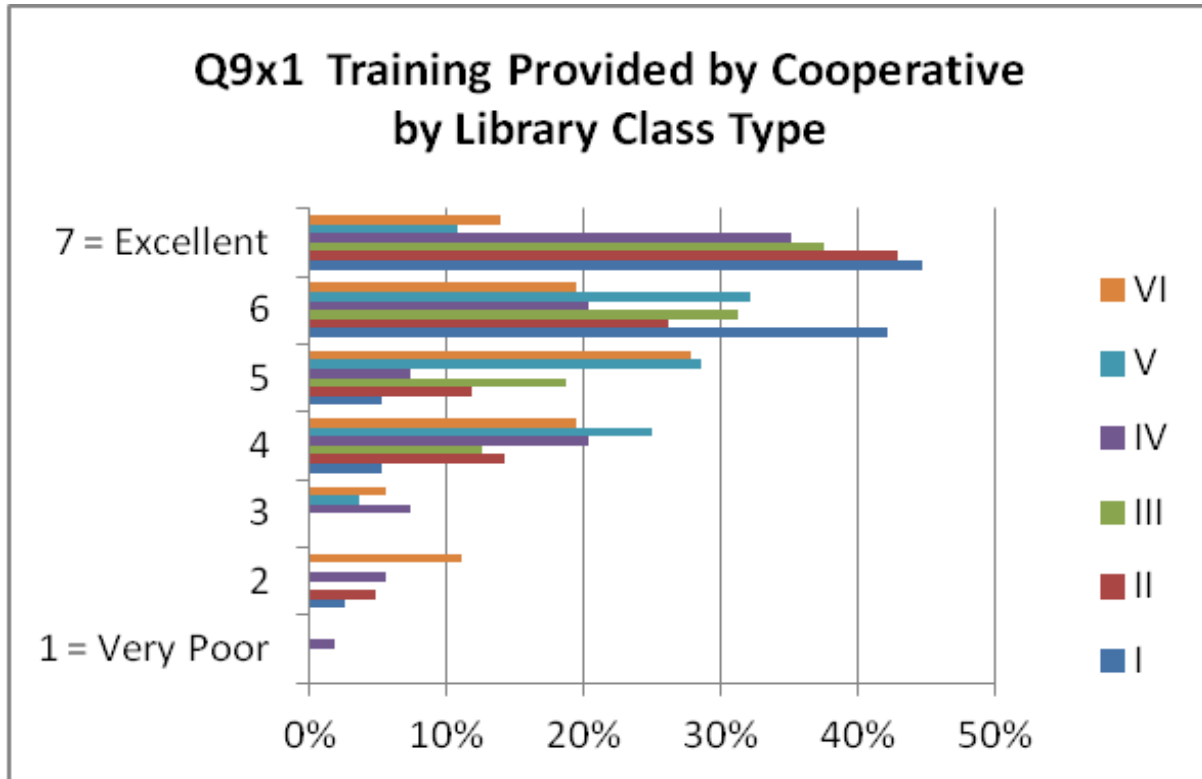
14% of respondents suggested a “weekly e-mail” blast



10% of respondents suggested using Facebook, while another 8% suggested Google Calendar.

(Q8) The “training” provided by the Cooperative was rated at a “7” out of 7.0 (Excellent) by 34% of respondents. Another 28% rated the training at a “6” and 16% each rated this issue a “5” or “4”. The mean score for this issue is 5.58 out of a possible 7.0

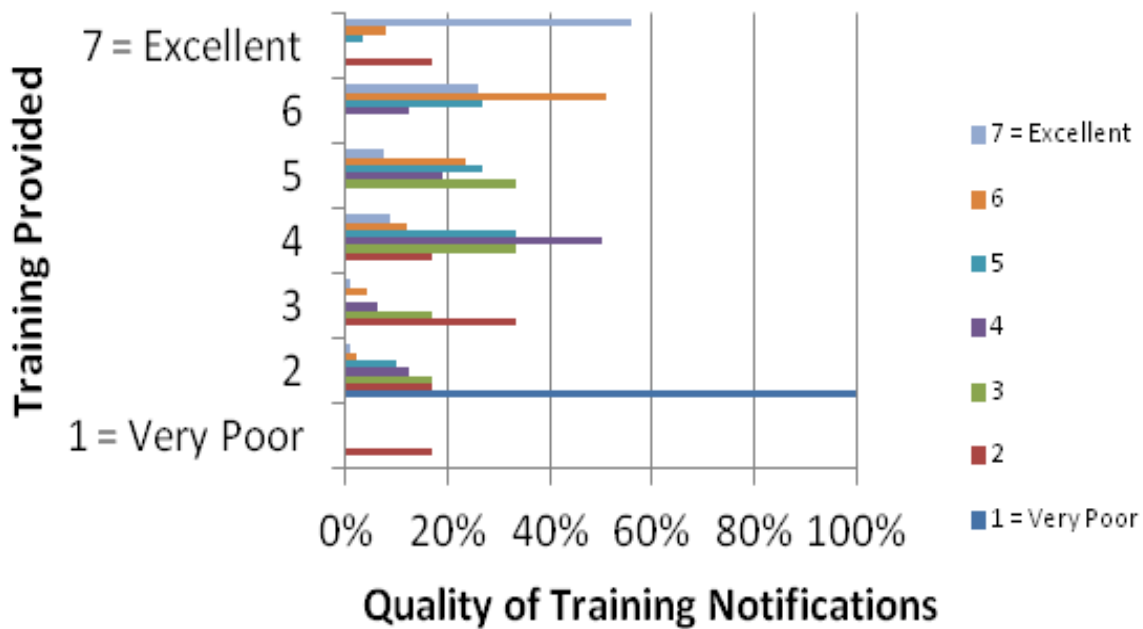
There are some differences by Class of Library. Class V and VI libraries tended to provide a score in the “4” - “6” range while I-IV were more likely to provide a “7” rating. Class VI libraries were also more likely to provide a “2” rating. (See Chart Q9x1)



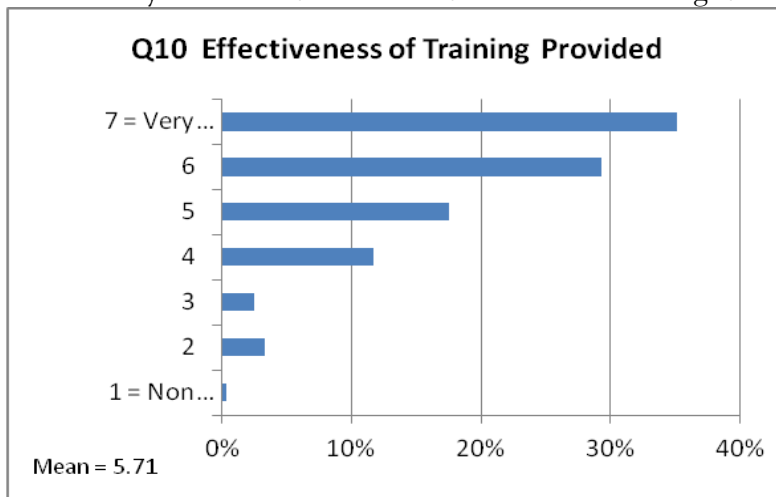
While there were also some differences by Library Co-Op these differences weren't statistically significant due to the small sample size represented by a number of the Cooperative. (Q9x2)

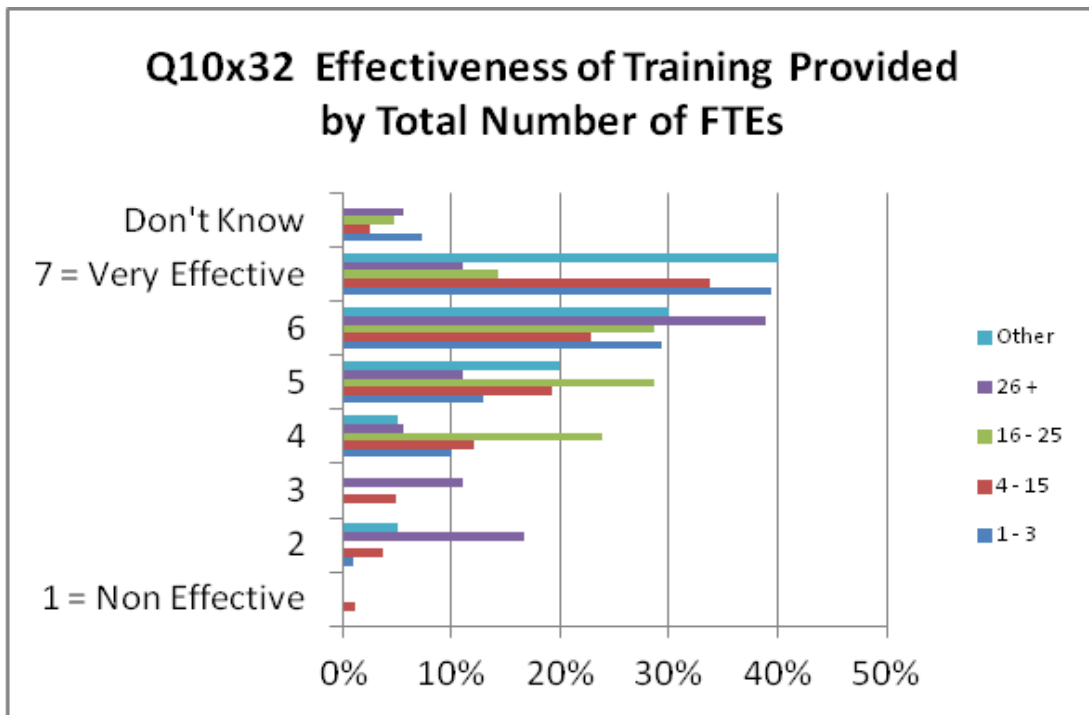
There is a high level of positive correlation between the score provided for “Quality of training provided by the Co-Op” and “Opportunity for Input”. In effect, those who felt they had high levels of opportunity for input tended to score the quality of training high. . . and vice versa. (Q9x6) Similarly, there is a high positive correlation between scores awarded to “Training provided by the Cooperative” and “Quality of Training Notifications” (Q9x7)

Q9x7 Training Provided by Cooperative by Quality of Training Notifications



“Effectiveness of Training Provided” was rated at a “7” or “Very Effective” by 35% of the respondents with 29% rating the effectiveness at a “6” and 18% at a “5” of 7.0. The mean score for this question is 5.71 out of a possible 7.0. Approximately 17% of respondents scored this attribute at a “4” or lower. (Q10) There were no significant differences by Class Size. By Membership type the differences did not rise to the threshold of significance due to the small sub-sample size. (Q10x2) By number of FTEs there is a difference with Libraries with fewer FTEs more likely to score the training provided at a “7” while those with greater numbers of FTEs were more likely to score a “6” with almost 20% scoring a “2”. (Q10x32)





When asked how the Cooperatives can improve training 28% (plurality response) “Didn’t Know” . Another 25% suggested “increase the number of offerings”, and 23% suggested “Webinars”. 20% had “Other” suggestions (See Tables) which included statements like:



-Increase the variety as well as the number, and perhaps develop a database of speakers/presenters that libraries could hire for In-service days, etc.
-webinars and video conferences in winter and increase number of training offerings
-More offerings of the same training. Frequently hard to attend when there are only 1 or 2 dates provided. (which should be ample, but never seems to be.)

The verbatim comments were largely positive reflecting satisfaction with the current training environment. In some cases, “more dates” were requested. Some requested more webinars, others preferred not to have webinars. For the most part comments reflected a relatively consistent tone of satisfaction.

Those who were more satisfied with the effectiveness of the training were more likely “not to know” what else could be done to improve the quality of the training. Those who were less satisfied with the effectiveness of the training were more likely to suggest either an “increase in offerings”, “webinars” or “other”. (Q. 11x10)

When asked if there were additional training or service needs respondents provided a spectrum of suggestions (See Table). Ideas include a wide range of suggested programs/ services. A typical set of suggestions includes:

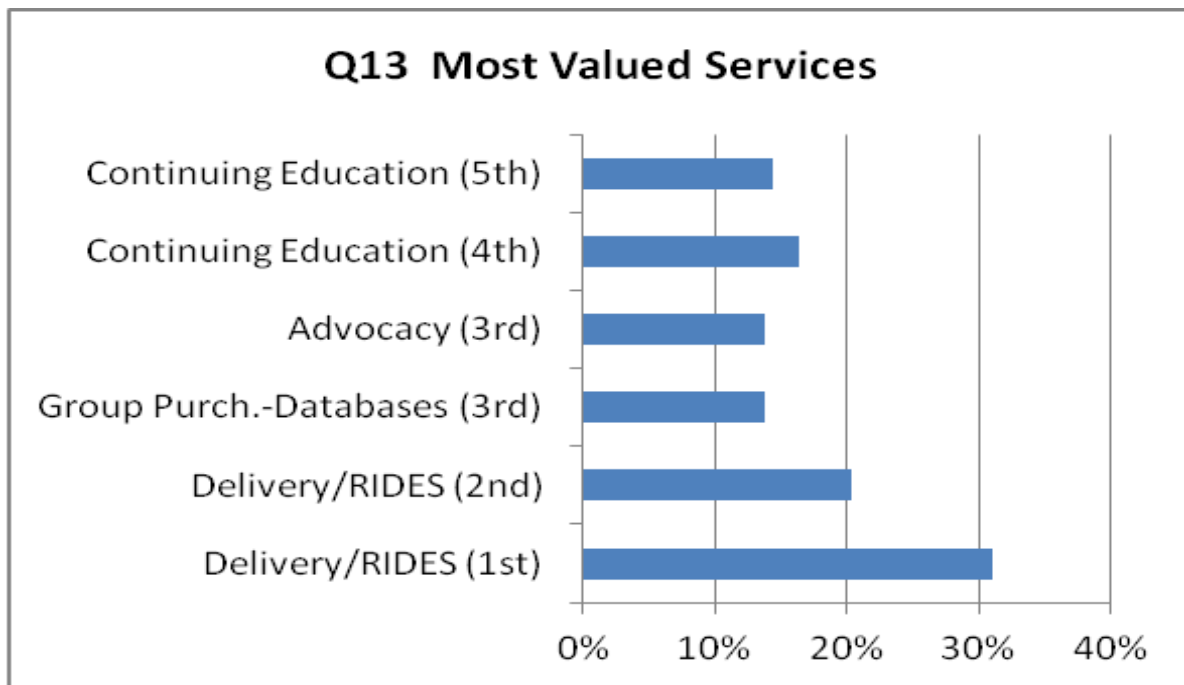
accessing and designing reports

increased tech training

Customer Service!!!! (multiple suggestions on this)

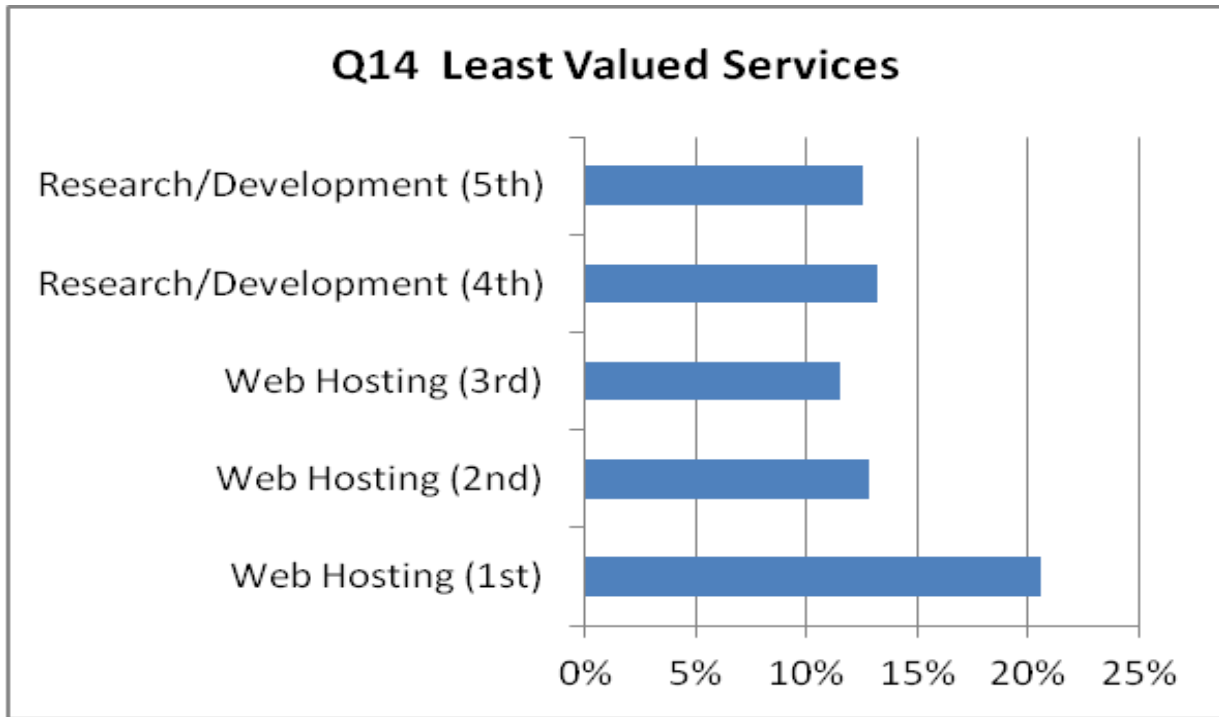
EBook reader selection and use.

Most valued services include Delivery/RIDES which scored highest in both first and second place (respondents could mention the same item in each of five choice categories). (Q13)

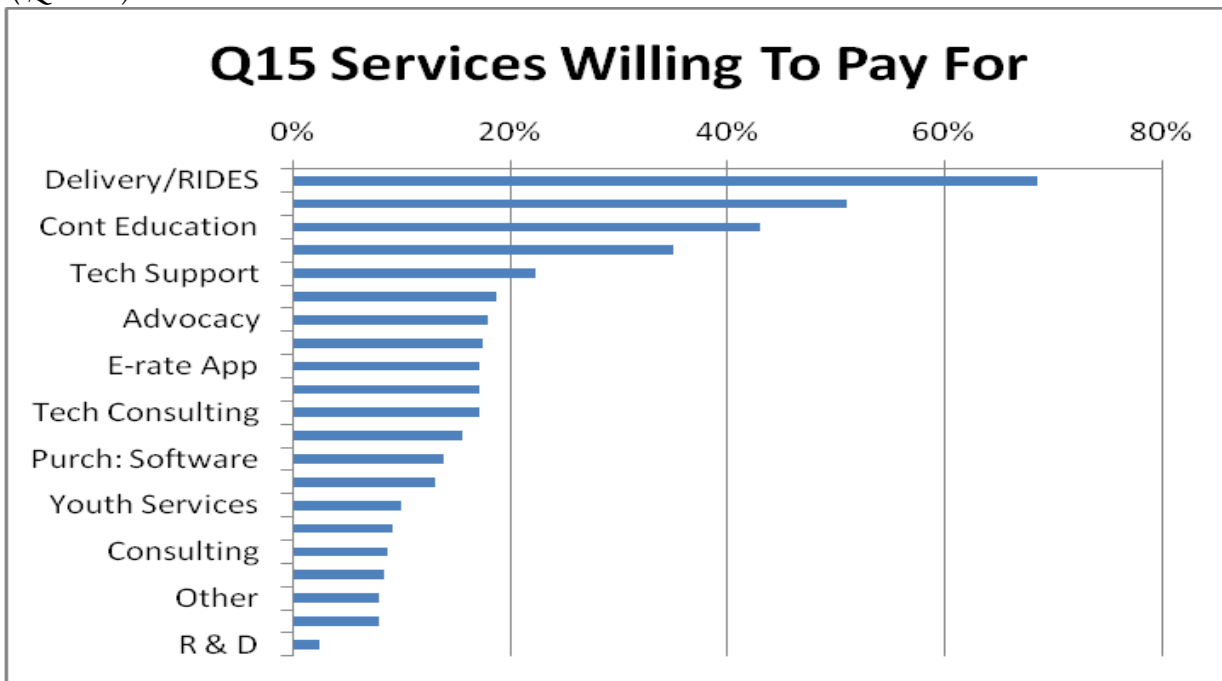


Among the “least valued” services “Web Hosting” scored first, second and third, with “Research and Development” following.

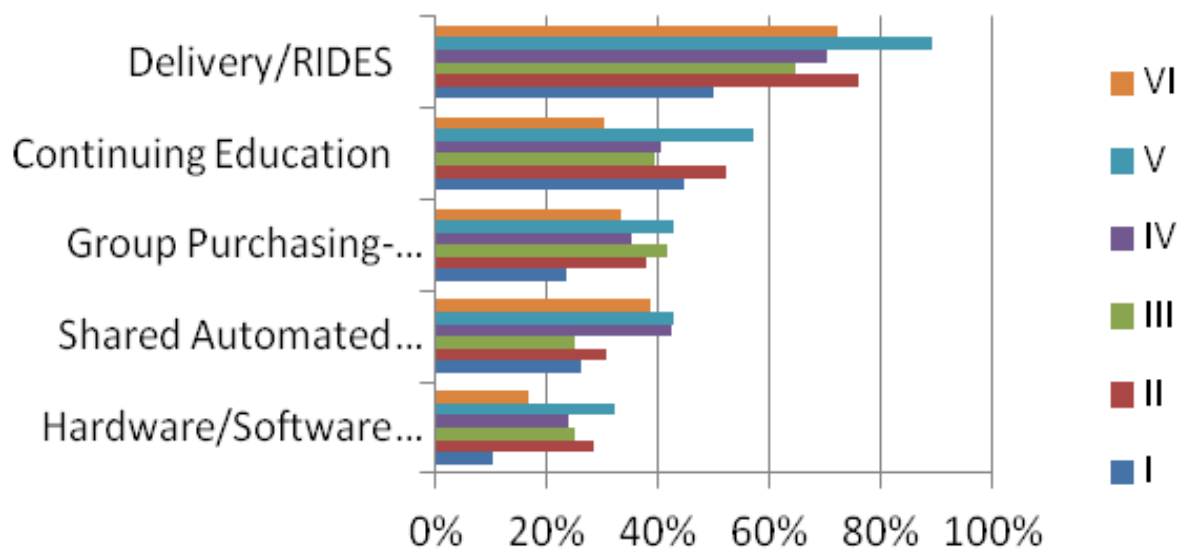
The repeated high scoring of these items suggest a strong interest on the part of the constituents to send a message these services are not desired. (Q14)



Among the services respondents are willing to pay for (Q15) “Delivery/ RIDES” continues to score well. “Continuing education” ranks a distant second and “Group Purchasing- Databases” ranks 3rd. . . although there is not a statistically significant difference between the number 3, 4 and 5th ranked items in this list. Other items queried are shown in descending order. When looking at the top 5 ranked services by Library Class Type there are some differences but there it seems surprising how consistent the scores are between the different Class Libraries. In fact, there is not a significant difference among most of the Library Classes on these ratings. (Q15x1)



Q15x1 Services Willing to Pay For by Library Class Type



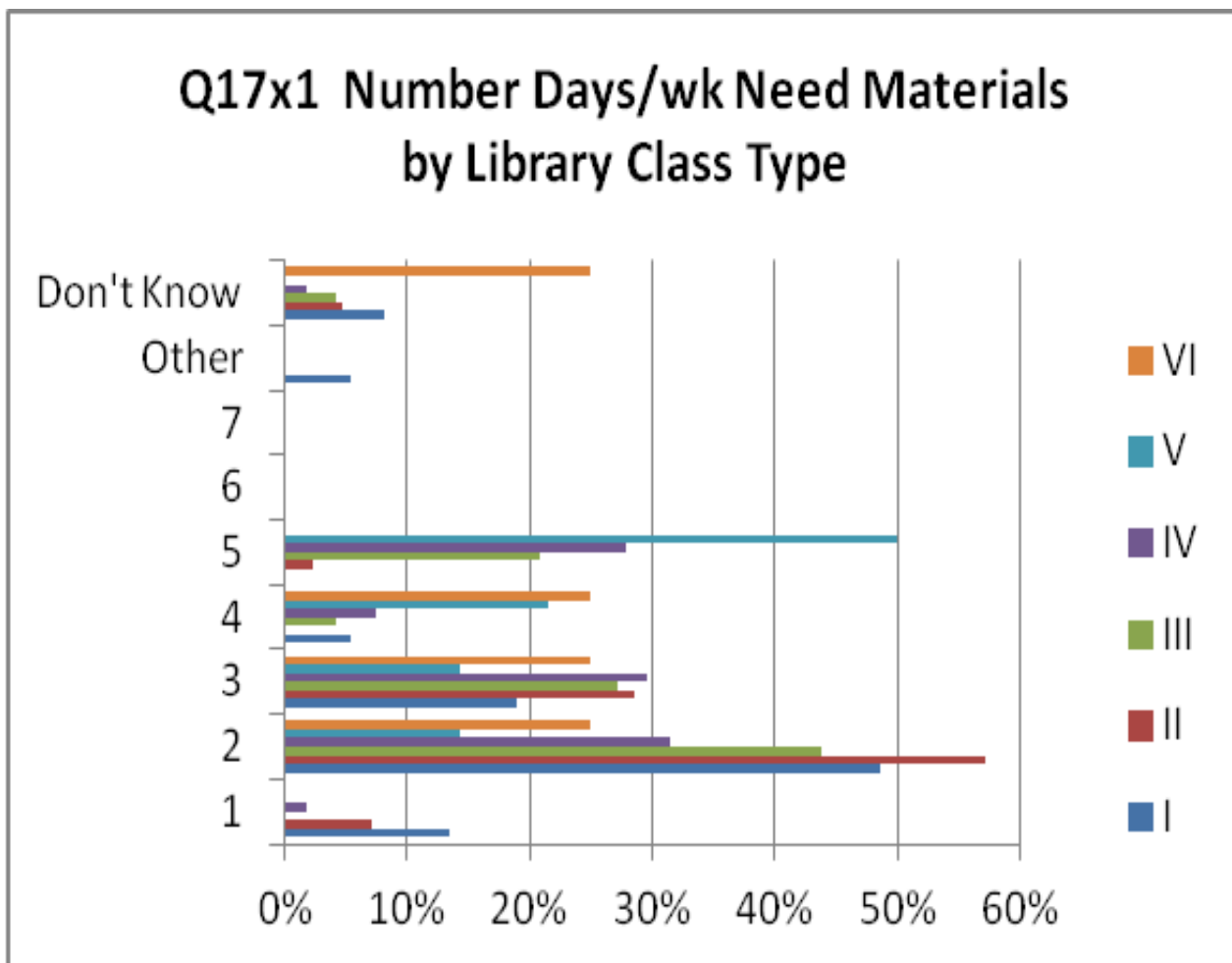
Over 1/2 (54%) of respondents note they receive materials two days per week. The table for materials received is shown below: (Q16)

Number of days	% Respondents Receiving
2	54%
5	21%
3	13%
4	7%
1	1%
6	.005%
Other	2%
Don't Know	3%

As might be expected there are significant differences by class size. Class V and VI Libraries are much more likely to receive materials 5 days a week, while Class I and II Libraries are much more likely to receive materials 2 days per week. There appears to be no statistical difference among Library Cooperative.

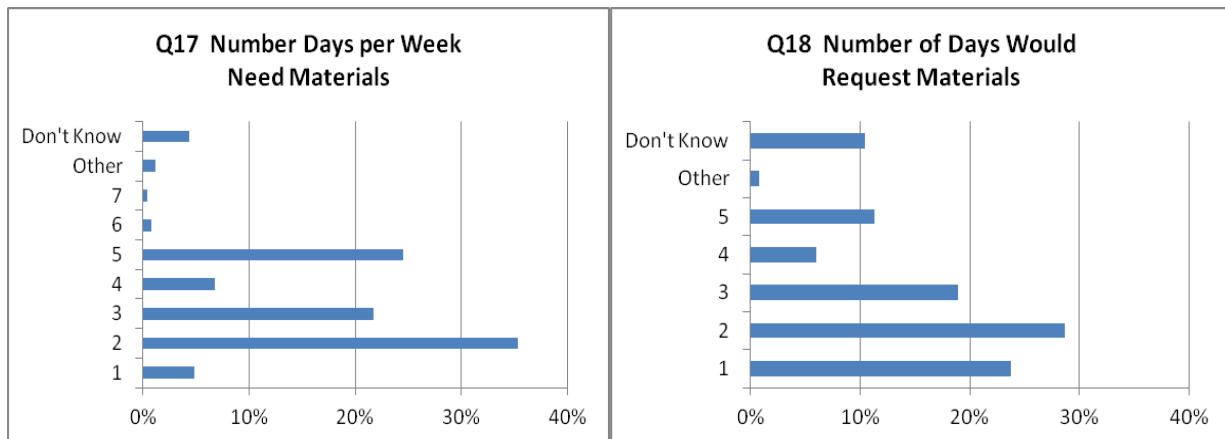
When comparing the days respondents receive materials with what their preferences might be it is apparent a number of respondents are receiving materials less often than they like (change from 2 day frequency of 54% to 35% and from 5 day from 21% to 25%). A majority of those wishing more frequent materials delivery would like to see the frequency moved to 3 days per week (from 13% to 22%).

Number of Days	From	To
7	0%	.005%
6	.005%	1.0%
5	21%	25%
4	7%	7%
3	13%	22%
2	54%	35%
1	1%	5%

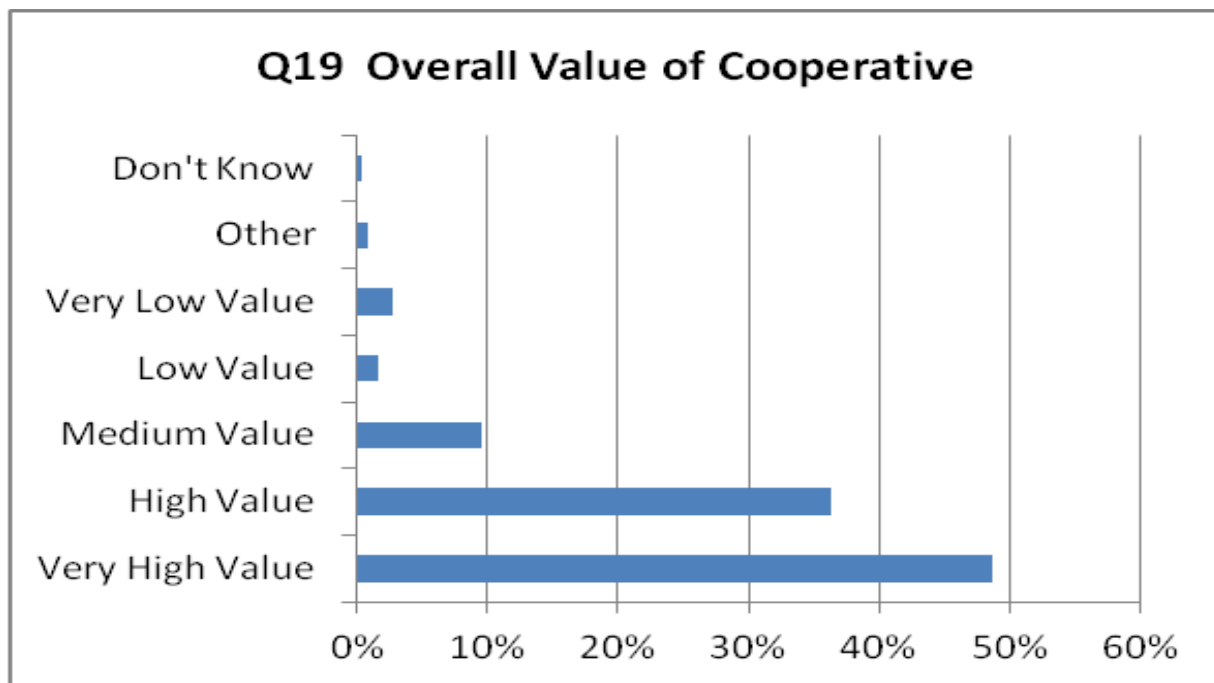


As noted in Q17x1 there is a correlation between size of library and the number of days desiring material delivery. This may be an intuitive finding but it is borne out with some consistency although there are Class VI libraries that wish to have materials delivered only two days as well as those that desire material delivery 5 days.

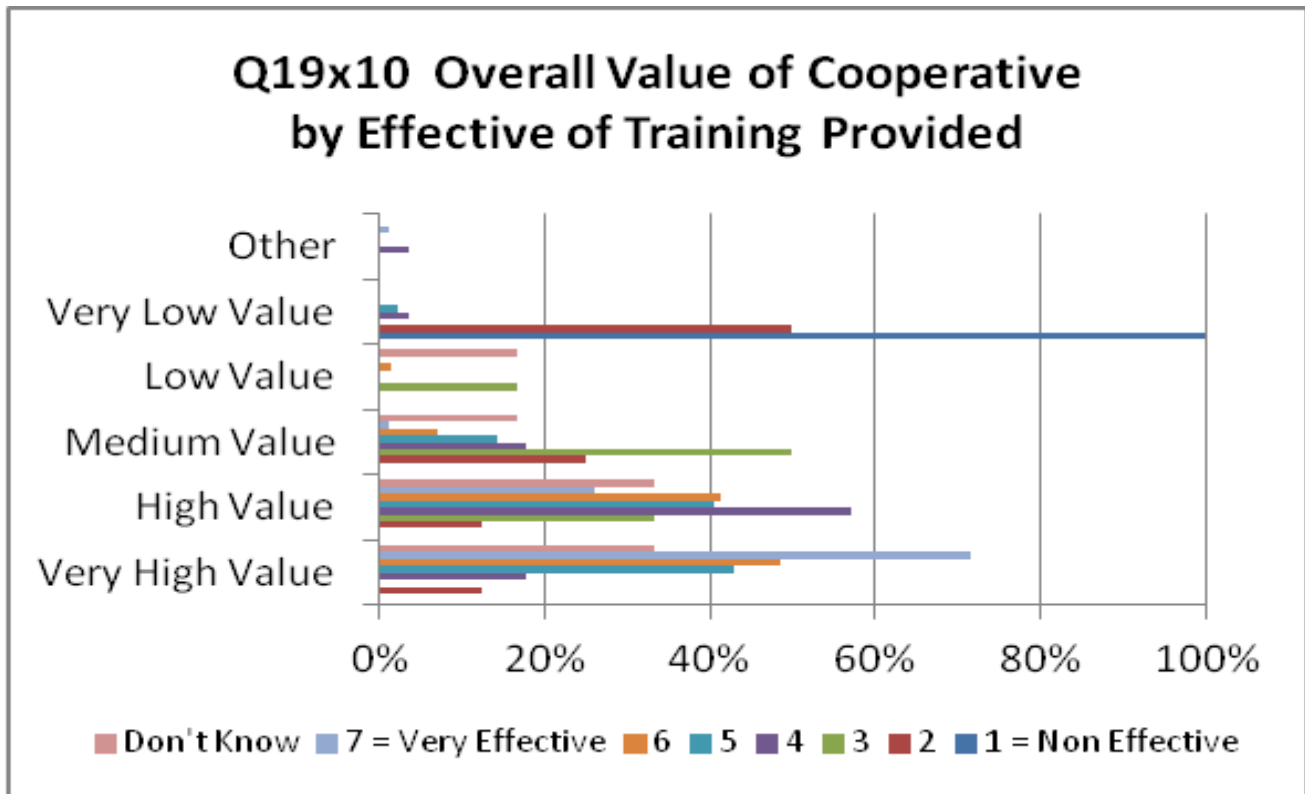
The number of days a library “needs materials” (Q17) is considerably different than the number of days a library will “pay for materials” to be delivered (Q18) In fact, the “Don’t Know” response goes up dramatically, and the number of libraries desiring 5 day delivery is reduced by more than ½.



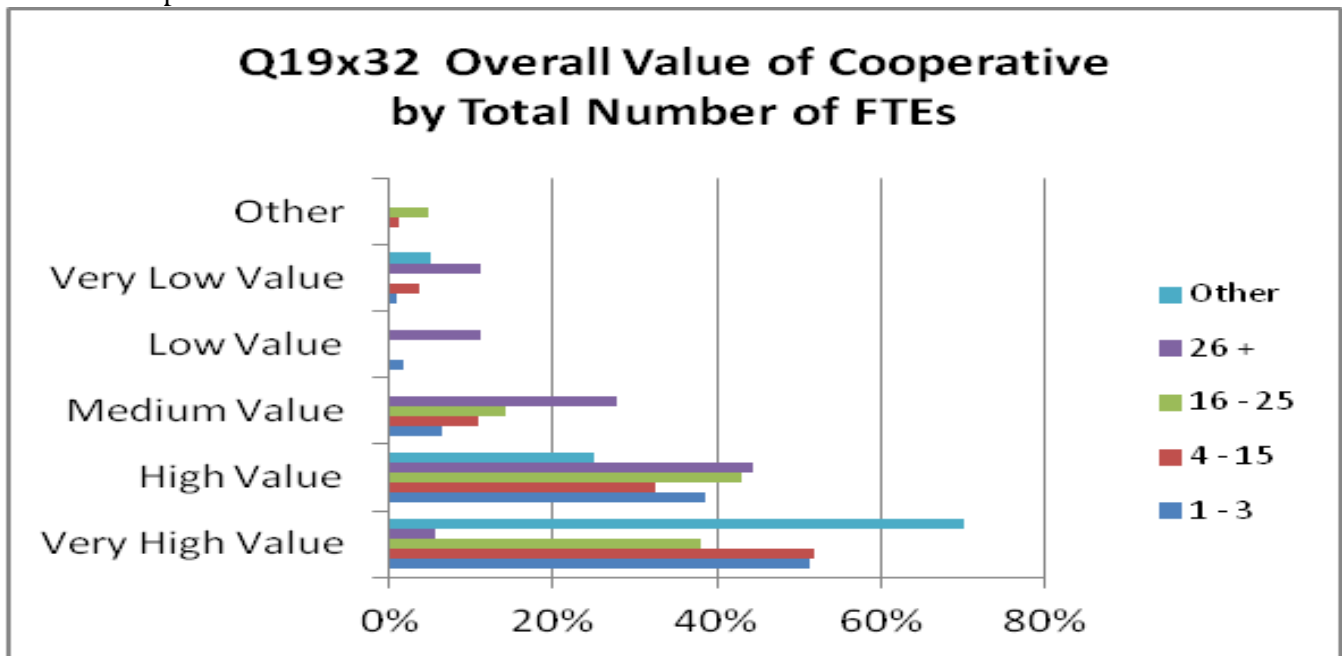
The Overall Value of the Cooperative is seen as “Very High” by 48% with another 37% rating it as “High”. (Q19) Because the numbers are so concentrated at the “6” and “7” levels there are no meaningful differences by Class size or membership. (Q19x1, 19x2)



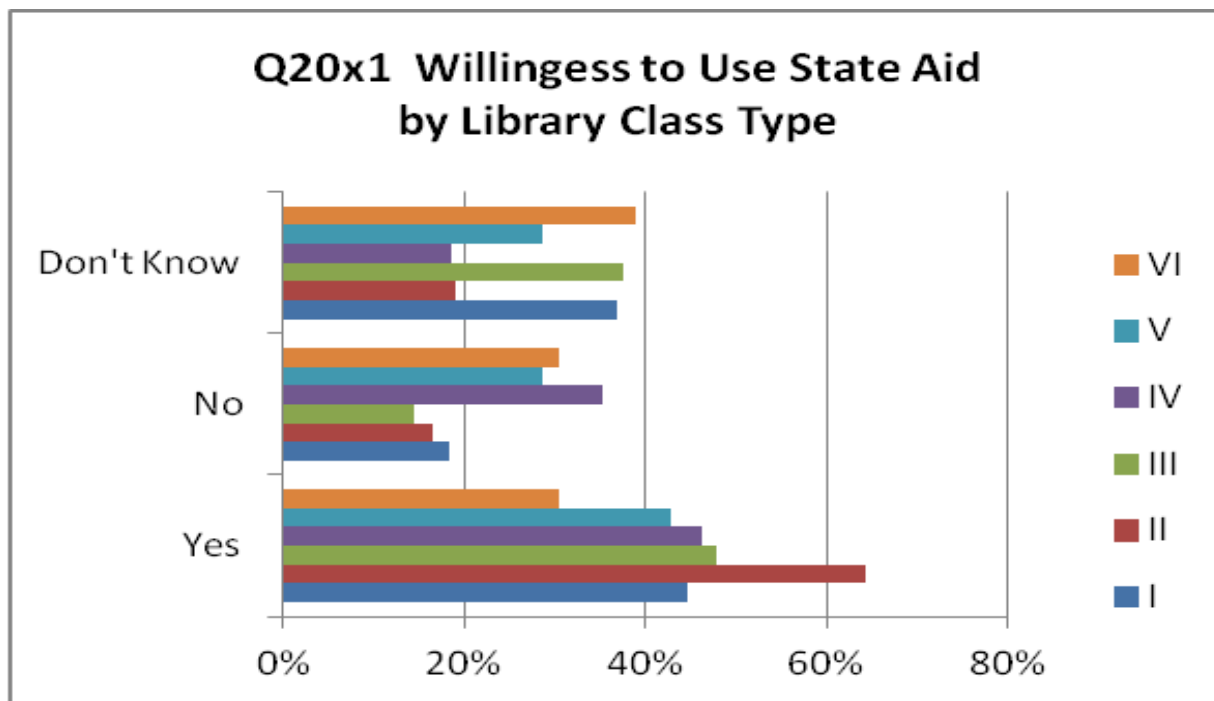
There is a strong positive correlation between perceptions of the “Effectiveness of Training Provided” and the “Value of the Cooperative”. The higher the perceived effectiveness the higher the score for value.... (Q19x10)



There is also a correlation between the perceived value of the Cooperative and size of the Library. Those libraries with more than 26 FTEs are likely to cite a lower total perceived value for the Cooperative than those libraries with fewer FTEs.



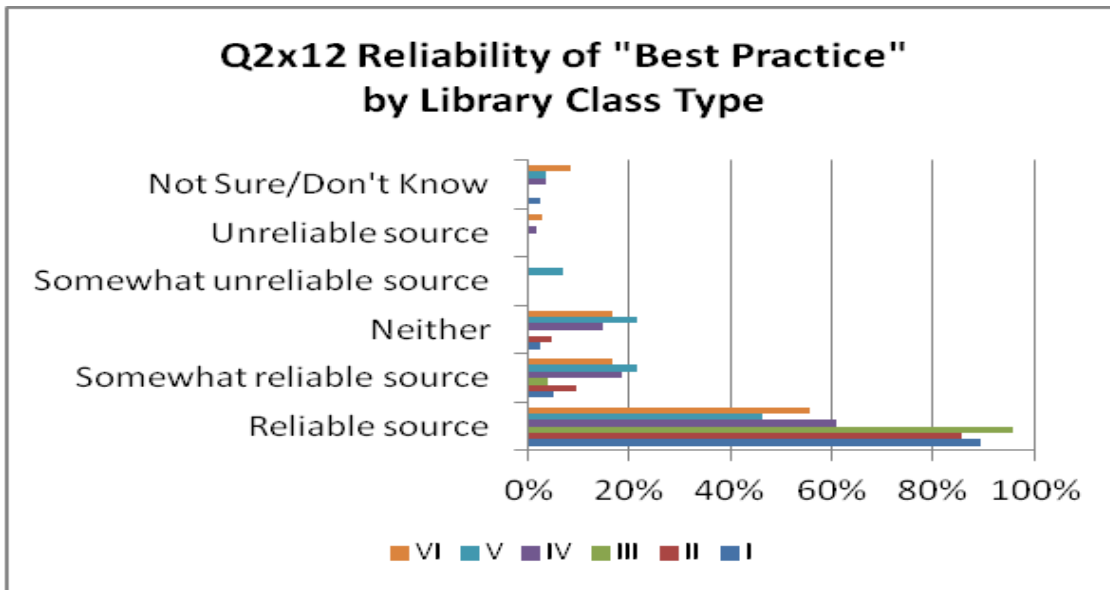
Approximately 46% of respondents were willing to use all State Aid to support the Cooperative. (Q20) Another 29% “Didn’t Know” while 25% were against this move. By Class Size there were some differences.... the larger libraries and those with more FTEs and a larger budget were more likely to be against the use of State Aid for this purpose while smaller libraries were more likely to be supportive. (Q20x1)



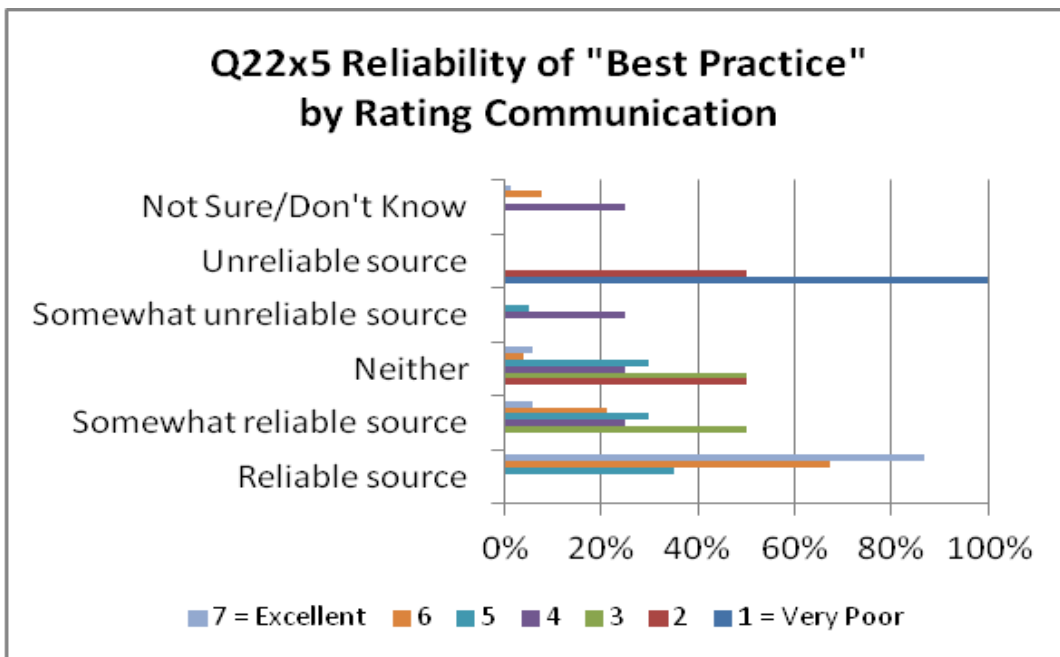
When asked to elaborate (See Tables) there were many responses that essentially fell into one of three camps:

- 1) The Cooperative is critical and we need to help keep it going.
- 2) My library is in a desperate struggle for survival and the State Aid, while it isn't much is critical for us.
- 3) I'm in the middle. . if the Cooperative can deliver more value for what they do than what the State Aid provides, we could probably swallow hard and accept it...but it won't be easy.

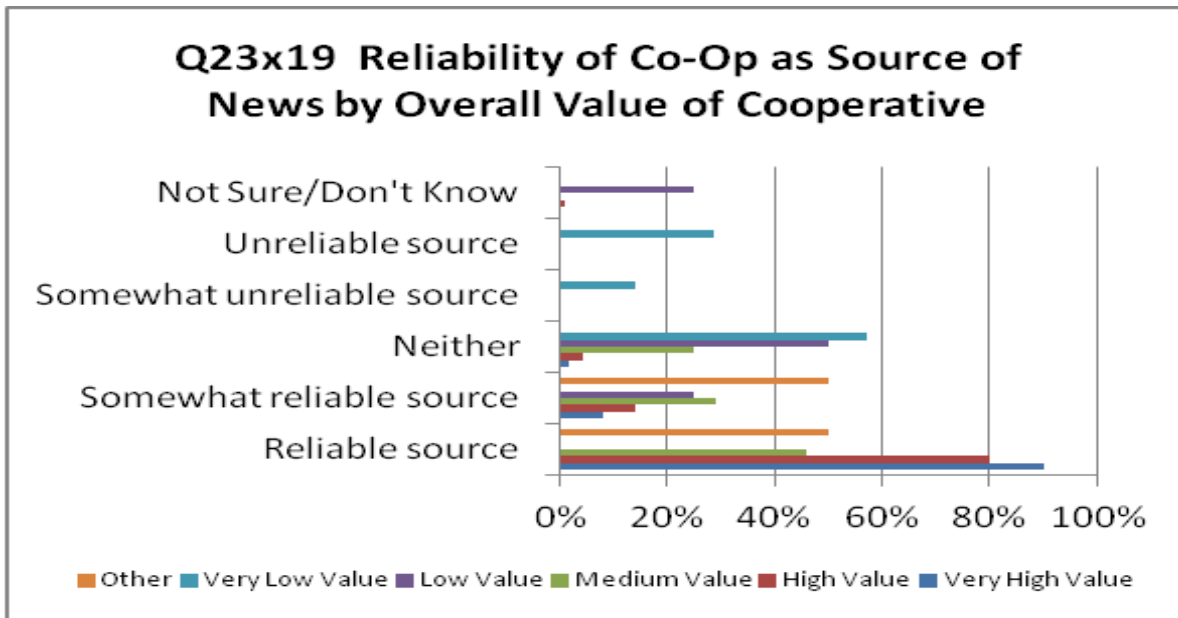
Almost ¾ (74%) consider the Cooperative to be a “reliable source” regarding “best practices” in the Library industry. Another 12% consider the Cooperative to be “somewhat” reliable. There is a modest amount of difference in scoring by Class Size (Q22x1) and some differences by Library Cooperative membership but this is not statistically sound due to small sample sizes.



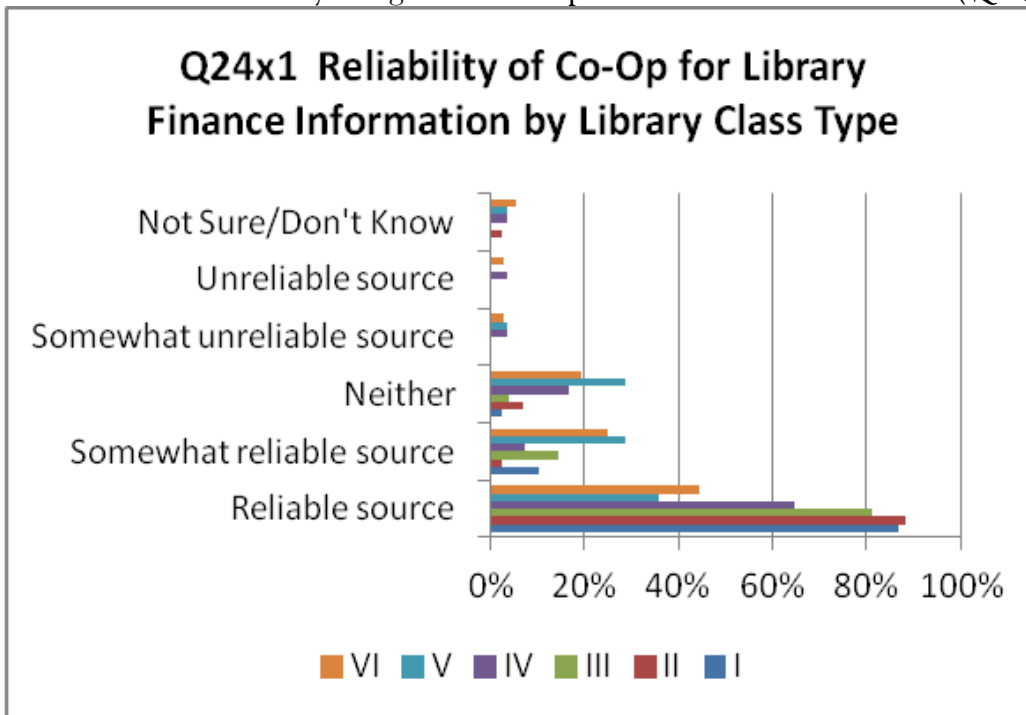
There is a positive correlation between the perceived “amount of communications” and “reliability as a source for best practice information Q22x3) as well as between the perceived quality of the communications and reliability of the Cooperative as a source (Q22x5)



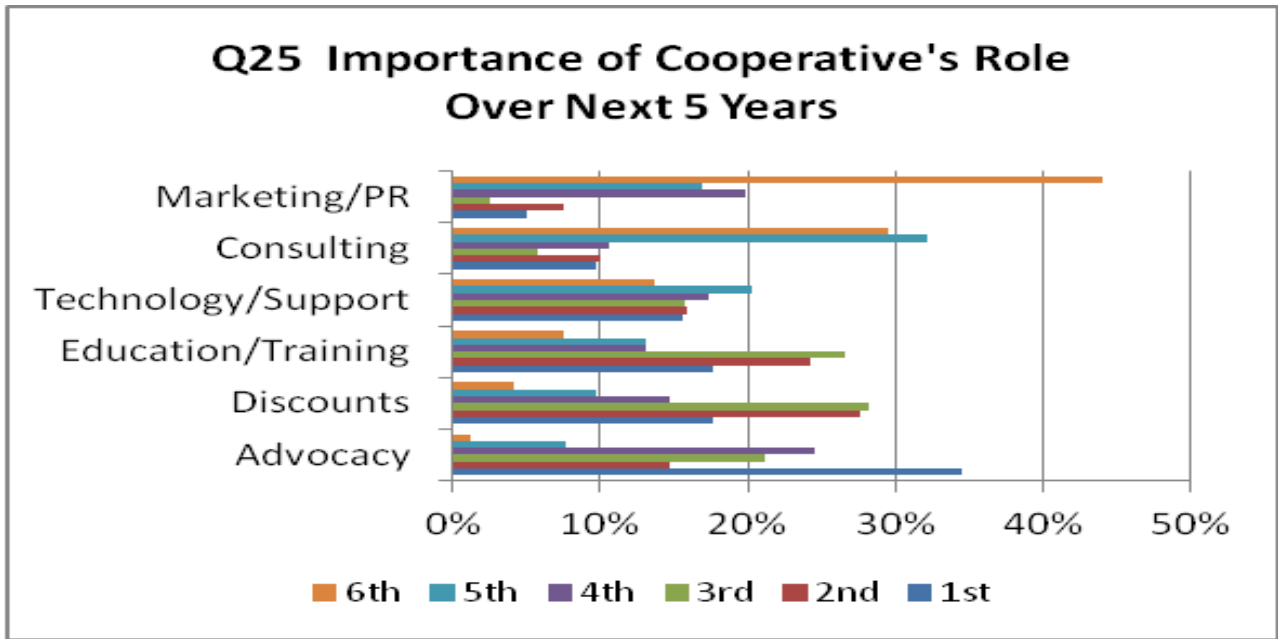
About as many respondents (78%) believe the Cooperative is a reliable source of Library News and Issues (Q23) There are no significant differences by Class Size although there is some trending that might suggest some larger libraries see the Cooperative as less of a reliable source than other class size libraries. (Q23x2) There were similar correlations relating to the perceived overall value of the Cooperative and the reliability of the Cooperative as a source for Library news (Q23x19)



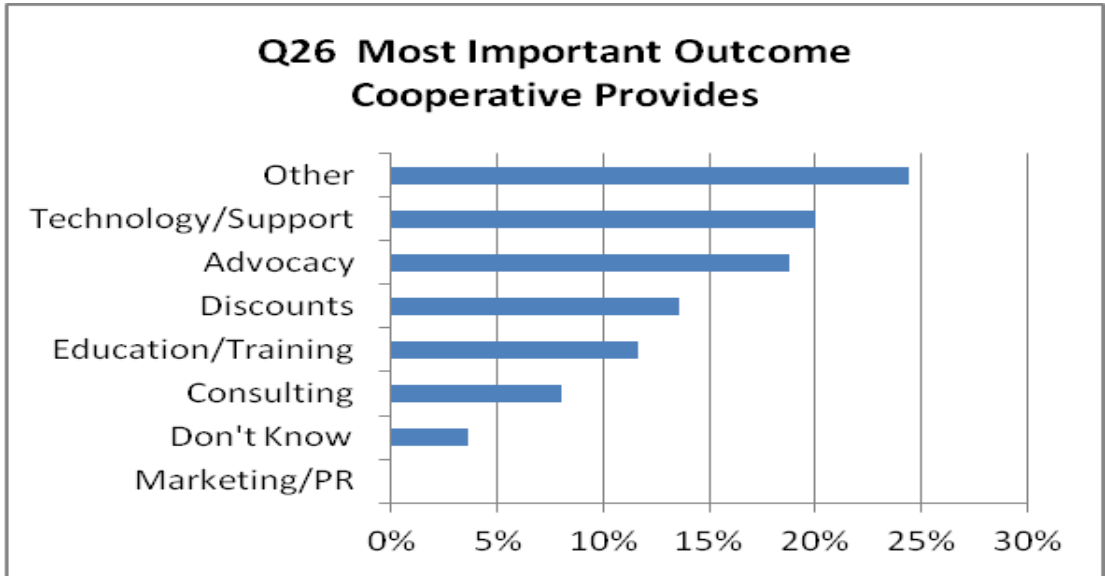
Somewhat fewer respondents see the Cooperative as a “reliable” source for Library Finance Information (70% vs. 78%) and as with other questions of a similar nature, larger class size libraries are somewhat less likely to agree the Cooperative is a reliable source while smaller libraries are more likely to agree the Cooperative is a reliable source (Q24x1)



While respondents provided a diversity of responses to the question of what should be the Cooperative’s most important role over the next 5 years there is a trending for more support to go toward “Advocacy”, “Discounts” and “Education/ Training” while somewhat less support for “Technology/ Support”, “Consulting” and “Marketing/ PR” (Q25)



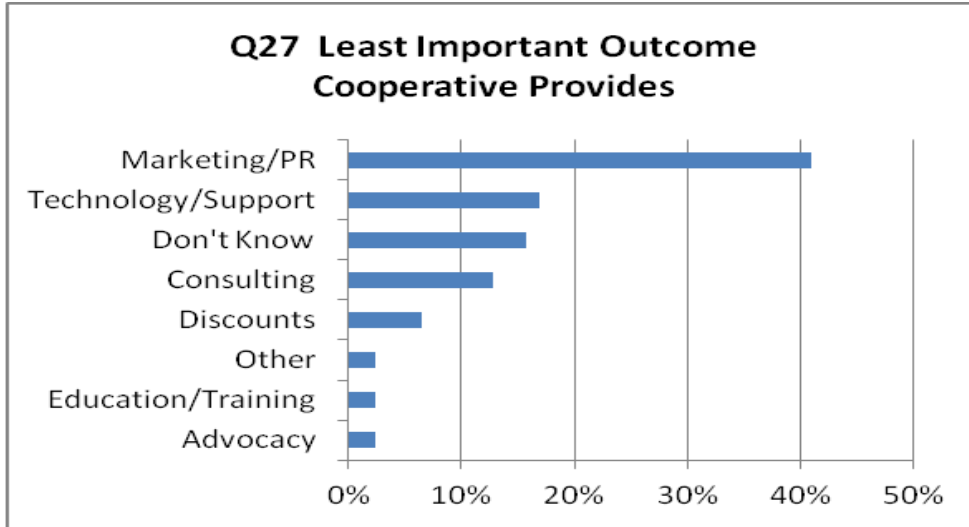
The look for the future is considerably different than the perceived current most important outcomes provided by the Cooperative (Q26). The plurality view (20%) is that “Technology and support” is the most important outcome. This differs from the score for “Technology and Support over the next 5 years in Q25 which is given a more middling score. However, “Consulting” and “Marketing/ PR” are given fairly low marks in Q26 as they are seen as low priority in Q25.



There are some differences by Class Size with the smaller libraries more likely to cite “Advocacy” while larger libraries are more diverse and likely to score higher in other areas such as “Technology/ Support” or “Other”.

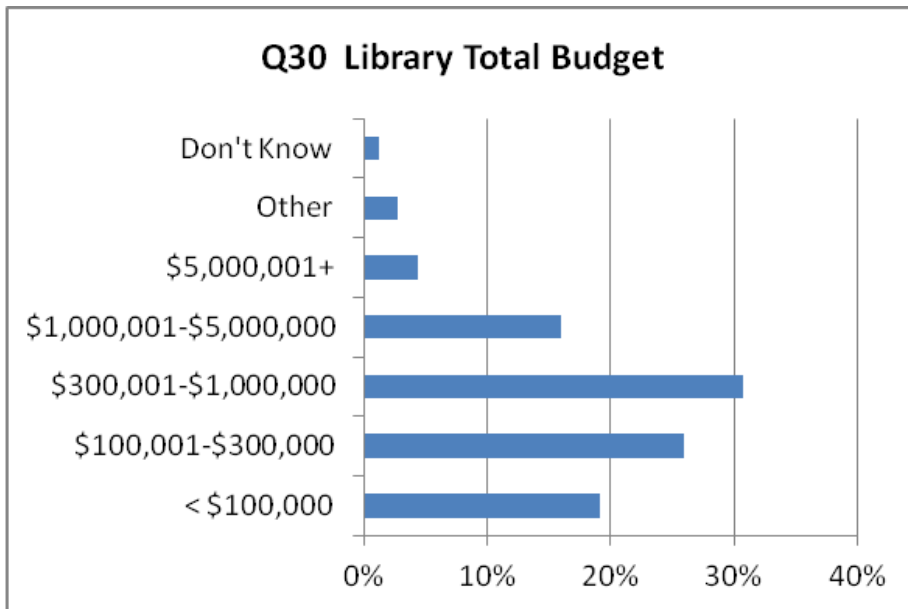
As may be anticipated the “Least Important Outcomes” (Q27) are for the most part the opposite of the scores seen in Q26 although interestingly “Technology/ Support” is given a relatively high score as “least important” where it was given a fairly good score as most important as well.

This may suggest a certain amount of ambivalence regarding the service provided in the “Technology and Support” area with some respondents very supportive and others with a very different view.

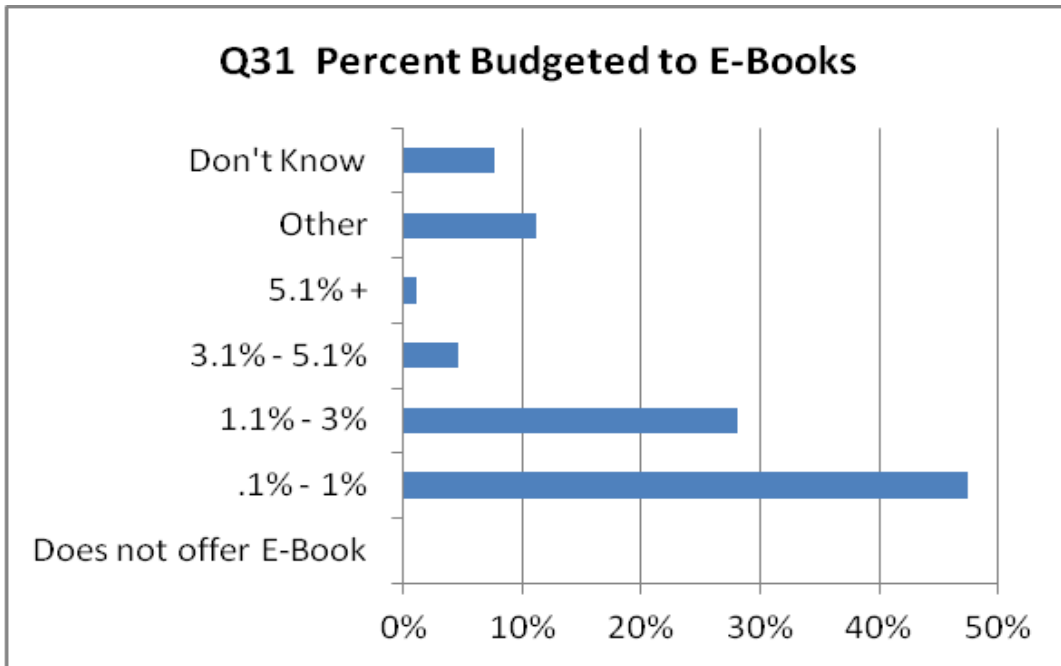


Demographics

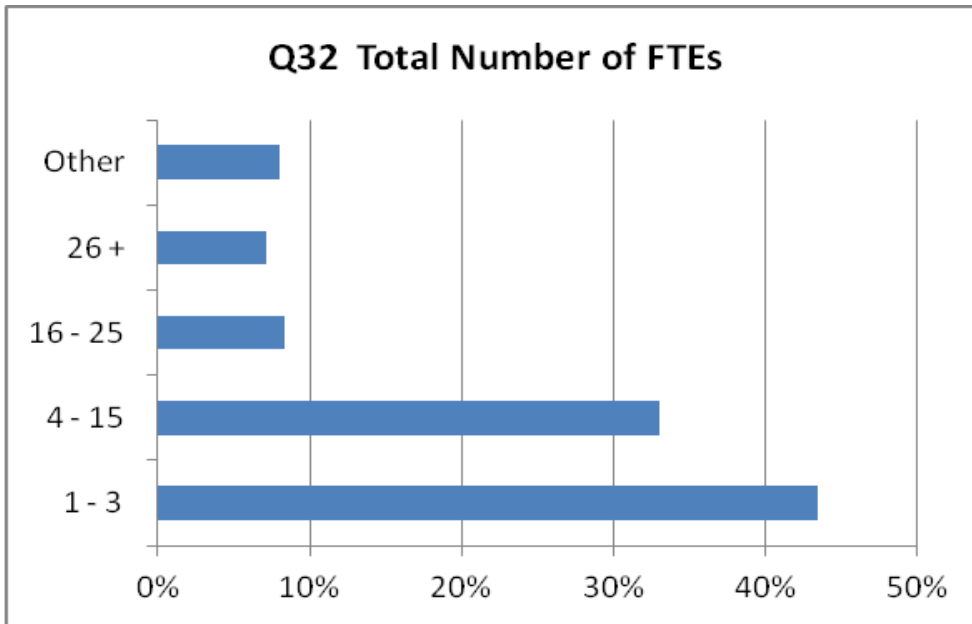
The characteristics of the respondent libraries measured includes “Total Budget”, “materials budget”, “E- Book budget” and “FTEs”. The plurality response is a budget of \$300k-\$1.0M with 31% of respondents. Almost 45% of all respondents, however have a budget which totals less than \$300k. (Q30)



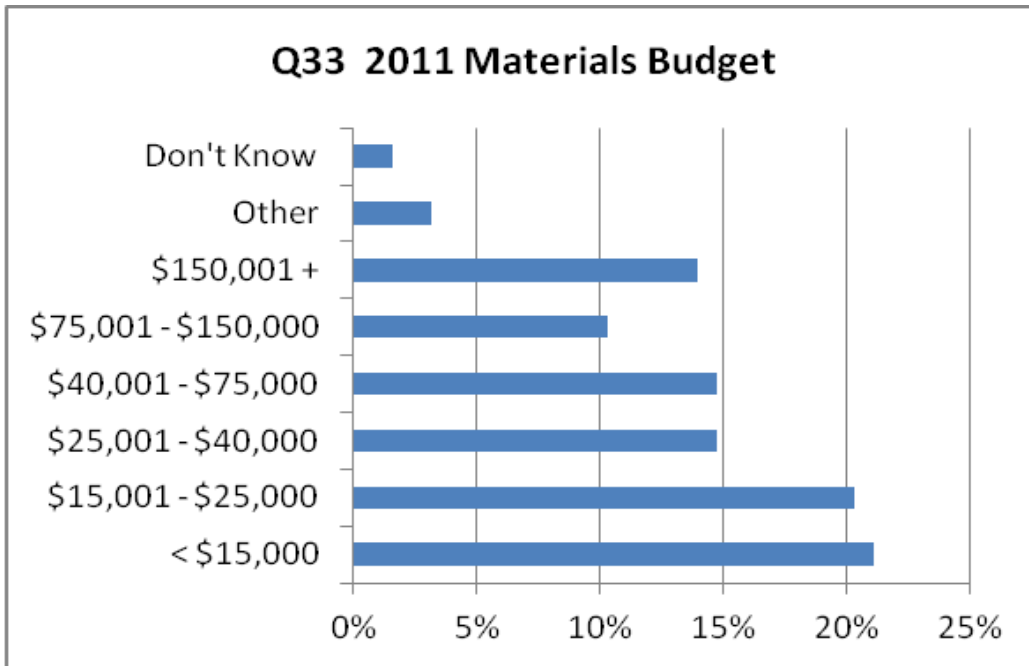
While there appeared to be no correlation between budget size and % of the budget devoted to e-books, there is a clear relationship that exists between the Library Total Budget and the number of FTEs. (Q30x32) Although there is no apparent correlation most (47%) respondents report spending less than 1% on e- books. (Q31)



As the total budget proportions suggested a plurality of small libraries, the FTE count reinforces that proportion with 43% of respondents citing 1-3 employees. Only about 8% of respondents report 26 or more employees. (Q32)



Compared with a relatively steep dropoff in FTEs after the first two tiers and with over ¾ of respondents reporting 15 or fewer employees the materials budget report is more evenly distributed. (Q33)



While there are no significant correlations, there is, as might be expected, a proportional relationship between the overall budget for the Library and the materials budget.