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The latest on our new initiatives

More patron surveys are on the way

You may recall that last year, NLS teamed up with the Gallup polling and research company to survey current and potential patrons—more than 5,000 in all—about a variety of topics, including their access to, and ability to use, technology.

“We learned a lot of really good stuff,” said David Spett, NLS’s data analyst. “For instance, our patrons are pretty evenly split between those who are very tech-savvy, not tech-savvy, and somewhere in between. A majority of our patrons have technology that would enable them to use BARD—a computer or smartphone or tablet with Internet access. But most of those people are not using BARD. We had previously believed that lack of technology or Internet access was the problem, but that seems to not necessarily be the case. A lot of people said they don’t use BARD because they prefer mail delivery or aren’t comfortable with newer technology.”

Now NLS is planning two more surveys with Gallup to follow up on what we learned last year.

The first survey will seek to determine patrons’ satisfaction with various facets of NLS service, their technological preferences and capacities, and their willingness to use—or barriers that keep them from using—BARD and the BARD Mobile app. The goal is to survey at least 2,250 patrons. At least 500 of those patrons will be active BARD users.

In the second survey, Gallup will interview 200 former patrons, or current patrons who have stopped using BARD, to gain insights into why they weren’t satisfied with NLS or with BARD.

“Findings from these surveys will improve our understanding of the best way to modernize and improve our operations by providing detailed information on patron satisfaction, preferences, and capacities with respect to a variety of topics, particularly newer technologies,” Spett said. “And by also surveying former patrons and former BARD users, we hope to learn how we can reduce attrition from the program.”

NLS will also use Gallup to survey the patrons taking part in the braille eReader pilot, which began this month. Participants in the pilot are testing the popularity, ease of use, and reliability of the two eReader models—one produced by HumanWare, the other by Zoomax. Besides measuring participants’ satisfaction with the eReaders, Gallup will also ask about the adequacy of the training they received and how that training could be improved.

Participants in the eReader pilot will be able to respond to the Gallup survey online, in a phone interview with a real person, or via an automated recording using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology. Spett said that will give NLS insight into whether IVR is a feasible way to conduct surveys in the future.

We will share results of the 2019 survey and provide an update on this year’s surveys at the NLS virtual national conference this fall.

Watch for the next issue of *On the Move* in your inbox on September 24!