

*Excerpt from*

**Environmental Scan and User Profile for Public Library Setting**

**ABC Branch**

**ABC, NC**

**NOTE: The names of all companies, libraries, and colleagues mentioned in this report have been changed. My contributions to the report included pulling demographic data for the “Defining Users” section and authoring the “Design of Facility” and “Goals/Five-Year Plan” sections.**

## Introduction

The ABC branch of the Lighthouse County library is a 16,031 square foot facility in a city of 49,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Opened in 1986, this branch replaced the historical Hester Public Library located within the town YMCA (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019). In cooperation with the other four branches of the Lighthouse County Library, the ABC branch strives to connect residents with empowering and enriching information.

## Library mission

The mission of the Lighthouse County Public Library System as stated on the county website is to connect residents with information and resources that “*educate, enrich and empower*” (Lighthouse County Public Library, n.d.).

The library’s mission is in line with several goals set by the county itself as stated in the preliminary annual budget for FY 2020:

“Preserve and enhance the quality of life through public policy that promotes cross-jurisdictional collaboration, encourages growth while balancing its impacts and looks ahead to preserve quality of life [ . . . ] Support community connections through purposeful and strategic communication, enhanced education, active community participation and increased access to and utilization of services.” (Lighthouse County Budget Team, 2018, p. 281)

The strategic plan currently under development will highlight four or five key areas to focus on within the next five years according to community needs. Overall, the library strives to provide collections and access to materials and technology, connect patrons to information and resources for literacy, and promote lifelong learning through outreach, community engagement, and a customer-service oriented staff (Lighthouse County Budget Team, 2018).

## Defining users

The Lighthouse County Library System serves a total estimated population of 211,342 residents according to projections based on the 2010 census. The service area of the ABC branch extends to about 49,000 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Some highlights of the demographic data show the county is growing rapidly, and is younger, wealthier, in better health, and more highly educated than the rest of the state. Lighthouse County as a whole is younger than the rest of the state with the median age being 4.5 years younger than that of the rest of North Carolina (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018). Population growth ranks 8th in the state and this rapidly increasing population is projected to continue “at a rate over six times that of the ‘average’ county in North Carolina” (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p.9).

Within ABC, 67% of residents identify as White. The next largest percentages according to race or ethnicity are black or African American at 21.9%; Hispanic or Latino at 13.8%; two or more races at 2.4%; Asian at 1.6%; American Indian or Alaska Native at .3%; and Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander at .1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Considering much of the population growth can be attributed to an increase in the non-White population, there may be a greater need for a collection and services with a wide range of diversity which reflects the various ethnic groups of this community (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018).

The median household income of ABC is \$49,637, a significant difference from the median household income of the county (\$60,716). Although Lighthouse County's poverty rate is slightly below the national average of 11.1%, ABC has an alarming 16.1% of persons living in poverty. Despite the relative wealth of Lighthouse County, "unemployment has increased by more than twice the rate experienced by the entire state" (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p. 10). This data would suggest that there is a great need for our library to assist in providing equitable access to resources that allow for economic mobility.

Lighthouse County survey results indicate that the most valued services in every branch, including ABC, are books for adults (74%), books for children (56%), programs for children (36%), and books for teens (28%) (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p.13). The library website is also popular, ranking 5th among the most popular library resources (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018). Survey respondents in the county as a whole expressed a desire for more books and more children's programming.

In response to the Lighthouse County Needs Assessment survey, patrons responded that their library was valued highly for its accessibility, "equal access for all people, which is why the wi-fi and publicly available computers [are] such a great service" (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p. 71) It was also noted as a valuable space for children, families, and adults to "play, thrive" and take advantage of "educational activities" (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p.70). While there is a need to increase the collection, one patron noted that "I am often surprised that you have as many of the books I look for" (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p.42). Forty-four (44) percent of the ABC survey respondents stated that the library does an "excellent" job of meeting their needs, while 69% stated the library provides "excellent" customer service and support (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p.14).

That said, patrons did repeatedly cite a desire for an increase in the collection ("more copies of best sellers, and more than one copy of audio and e-books") (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p. 72). There was also a widespread desire to see a larger Spanish collection for adults and children and more bilingual programming and staff ("I think it would be important to possibly if we could get someone to help with Spanish and Bilingual programs. [...] I think some more Spanish materials would be helpful as well" (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2018, p.167). Patrons would also like to see more programming for children and expanded library locations - a fitting request in response to the boom in population and plans for revitalizing the downtown area (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019).

Major survey findings (population, economic position, median age, level of education) all indicate that library usage will continue to increase in coming years. In order to best serve the population, our library needs to update and expand its collection in accordance with community needs and facility limitations.

## Design of Facility

As noted in the Lighthouse County Public Libraries Facilities Assessment, the ABC branch is 16,031 square feet in size. The original space has not been enlarged since the building was built in 1985, although a history room was added in 2005 (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019, p. 3). The space boasts several strengths including .50 square feet of space per capita (higher than the state average of .45), an “open design,” and an abundance of natural light (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019, p. 37-38). As mentioned in the report, patrons have expressed appreciation for the facility’s single-floor layout and highly accessible entrance area.

These advantages notwithstanding, the space has its drawbacks. As noted in the assessment, patrons have mentioned the need for a designated area for teens, enhanced children’s space, increased signage, more “quiet space,” and better parking (Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019, p. 36-38).

Other concerns include the building’s size. The population of ABC has been increasing rapidly for several years. As noted on page 39 in the assessment report recommendations, a larger space will likely be needed to accommodate this growing population.

## Collection

The ABC branch currently holds approximately 65,000 print and non-print materials, with an additional 30 electronic resource subscriptions. (A. Colleague, personal communication, June 28, 2019). In FY2018, print materials circulated 149,785 times, while non-print items and periodicals circulated 23,369 times. In order to best reflect our community’s requests, we have expanded the Spanish Language and Large print collections and reduced the number of non-circulating reference texts. A new e-resource, Hoopla Digital, was made available to patrons in August 2018 after frequent requests.

### Collection Breakdown (A. Colleague, personal communication, June 28, 2019)

- ~32,500 Adult print materials in English, including:
  - Adult nonfiction books
  - Adult fiction books and graphic novels
  - Large-print Books
- ~4,000 Teen print materials in English, including:
  - Fiction and graphic novels
- ~23,000 Juvenile and children’s print materials, including:
  - Easy beginning readers and picture books
  - Juvenile fiction and graphic novels
  - Nonfiction and reference materials
- ~830 Spanish language print materials, including:
  - Adult fiction and nonfiction
  - Juvenile and children’s easy fiction and nonfiction
- ~5,800 Digital media materials, including:
  - DVDs; fiction and nonfiction

Audiobooks for adults, children, and teens  
Launchpads and playaways

- ~50 Subscriptions to newspapers and magazines

## Goals/Five-Year Plan

Based on the results of the Lighthouse County Needs Assessment survey, the ABC library branch is committed to accomplishing the following goals over the next five years. These goals correspond to the Public Library Association's "Potential Roles for Library Services Responses" mentioned in Sandra Nelson's 2008 book *Strategic Planning for Results* (as cited in personal communication with Research Co., Inc., 2019, p. 50) and to the Lighthouse County Public Library system's mission.

**ROLE: "Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure"** (from Sandra Nelson's 2008 book *Strategic Planning for Results*, as cited in Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019, p.51)

*GOAL: Adult library users in ABC will have access to a robust collection of books to enhance their personal and intellectual development.*

A recurring comment from our users is that the ABC branch's book collection is lacking in both size and title selection. Several residents also commented on the limited number of e-book offerings. Residents throughout Lighthouse County have stated how inconvenient it is to get to the library from their homes.

ACTION PLAN: As noted in the Collection Breakdown, the ABC branch currently holds 32,500 adult titles in English. As the population continues to increase, so will the need for books in all formats. Between 2019 and 2020, we plan to increase our adult fiction and non-fiction holdings by 25%. As part of this effort, we will build a resource collection for parents and teachers and expand our e-book offerings. To keep patrons abreast of the offerings, we will send out monthly flyers about new arrivals, make book displays showcasing them, and advertise the new offerings on social media.

To increase the accessibility of library resources, we plan to develop an outreach program for getting books to people who live far away from the branch. Between 2020 and 2022, we plan to establish 2-3 remote book depots in central locations in ABC. These depots will include a portion of the adult book collection we plan to enhance during 2019 and 2020.

**ROLE: "Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness"** (from Sandra Nelson's 2008 book *Strategic Planning for Results*, as cited in Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019, p. 50)

*GOAL: Spanish-speaking residents of ABC will have access to a robust collection of materials in Spanish.*

Approximately 13.8% of the ABC population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. The ABC library currently offers about 830 print titles in Spanish, compared to nearly 60,000 in English. Several survey respondents remarked on the need for more Spanish titles and programming. One also expressed a desire to have announcements in Spanish about children's programs.

**ACTION PLAN:** In acknowledgment of the need for more titles in Spanish and with the expectation that the need for these materials will increase as the ABC population grows, we plan to triple the ABC library's collection of books in Spanish between 2019 and 2024. To ensure that our selections meet the needs of the community, we will invite Spanish-speaking Hispanic and Latino residents to offer book suggestions prior to making our purchases. To promote the Spanish-language offerings, we will create book displays, send out flyers in Spanish to community residents, and advertise new offerings on social media.

**ROLE: "Create Young Readers: Emergent Literacy"** (from Sandra Nelson's 2008 book *Strategic Planning for Results*, as cited in Research Co., Inc., personal communication, 2019, p. 50)

*GOAL: The children and young adults of ABC will have access to books and programming that will encourage reading and educational achievement.*

User survey results indicate that books for children and teens are some of the most highly valued resources at the ABC library. While many survey respondents are happy with the children's offerings at the ABC branch, several wanted to see more materials for children. Residents also expressed a desire for more teen resources and activities.

**ACTION PLAN:** As noted in the Collection Breakdown, the ABC library currently has 4,000 materials for teens and 23,000 for children. From 2019 to 2020, we plan to increase our holdings for teens and children by 20% for each user group. These increased holdings will include a teen's nonfiction collection and more books in Spanish. To encourage the use of these resources, we will create book displays featuring them, send out flyers about the newer offerings, advertise the offerings on social media, and offer book clubs for children and teens.

*(Sections omitted: Current Programs and Budget)*