

Opinion Polling for the Library

A mini-presentation by

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Why Poll?

- To find out what voters think
- To find out what kind of tax they favor
- To find out how much they will pay
- To find out what particular library interests will persuade them to vote yes



The best reason:

- Because opinion polling is something elected officials understand

750,000 checkouts a year? So what?

75% of registered voters view library cuts as an important public issue? Really!



What does a telephone poll cost?

- You are paying for five things:
 1. The Pollster's time and expertise
 2. Office Overhead
 3. Sample Purchased
 4. Professional Interviewing Service
 5. Data Processing Costs



The Sample Purchased

- 500 randomly selected county residents?
- 500 randomly selected active voters?



Who do you hire?

- Easy to check credentials
- Hard part is finding somebody you like
- Check other libraries
- Ask your favorite elected official
Party affiliation, local experience and knowledge



What does the consultant do?

- Helps define what the poll is about
- Makes sure poll is asking questions that will provide answers
- Helps negotiate the questions through all the people who think they know a lot about polling



Polls can test opinion about what issues are most attractive to active voters.

- But remember: the poll is NOT a vote for or against a library service. It measures what active voters think, and they are only a small part of the library user base



What you get from a poll

■ Top line results

- "frequency distributions:" how many said yes or no and the percent of the total sample



What you get from a poll

■ Cross tabs

- Answers based on demographic data
- Knowing that 52% of respondents over 65 would vote for a library tax but that the overall support level is 70% tells you something useful about how the campaign should be targeted



Report & Recommendations from consultant

- The consultant provides detailed analysis of the cross tabs
- Makes a recommendation based on the results.

"Yours to loose"

"Go for it"

"Go now, not later—you'll never have numbers as good as these again."



May not be what you want to hear

- BUT: better to know now than after you've lost the election.
- And a reason to pay serious attention to the polling questionnaire—so at the end you will know WHY people won't support the library measure.

