

PRESS RELEASE

14 MILLION VISITORS CAN'T BE WRONG - PUBLIC LIBRARIES GET TOP MARKS FROM USERS

Public libraries continue to be one of the most popular public services, according to the results of a major survey launched by Minister Michael Kitt, T.D. today (25/9/2008).

The second nationwide survey of public library users reveals that there are over 14 million visits to public libraries each year, an increase of 17% since the previous survey was carried out in 2002.

Commenting on the increase, Minister Kitt said 'the increased visits to libraries around the country are a result of the significant investment made by the Government and the local authorities in the service over the past decade. We've seen fifty new libraries open their doors, 30% increase in opening hours, and 151% increase in spending on books and other materials. This has paid off in high rates of satisfaction with the service'.

In one of the largest surveys of its kind, over 33,000 library users in 369 branch and mobile libraries were asked what they visited the library for and what they thought of the service.

Most people (66%) visit the library to borrow books, DVDs and CDs. Library visitors are keen users of the Web, with almost 50% coming to use the Internet PCs.

Overall, 93% of respondents regard the service as either good or very good and 60% visit their library at least once a fortnight, with one third making weekly visits.

Introducing the survey results, Norma McDermott, Director of the Library Council, paid tribute to library staff whose helpfulness scored a remarkable 97% satisfaction rate among library users. 'Library managers and staff should be very proud of the service they provide', remarked Mrs McDermott: 'library staff are committed to giving excellent service to the public and their work is clearly appreciated by library users who have given them a huge vote of confidence'.

The publication of the survey results follows the launch in June of a major report on public libraries from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. *Branching Out: future directions* set out the priorities for the service over the next five years.

The second Public Library User Survey was carried out in September 2007 in all library authorities. The survey was co-ordinated by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (the Library Council) with funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The survey was designed and the results analysed and produced by the Institute of Public Finance in the UK.

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Notes for editors

A summary of the survey results is appended.

An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (The Library Council), established in 1947, is the statutory agency which advises national and local government on public library development in Ireland. An Chomhairle is involved in a range of activities to enhance the role of public libraries in Irish life and promote the use of the service to the public.