

City of Johnson City, TN

Case Profile

Population:

61,233

Square miles:

41

Median household income:

\$30,835

Form of government:

Council-manager

Performance Indicator

- **Citizen satisfaction with library services**

For FY 2006, the city of Johnson City reported that 97 percent of citizens surveyed rated library services as excellent or good. The mean and median values for all jurisdictions reporting were 88 percent and 86 percent, respectively.

Semiautonomous organization promotes quick responses to customers

Located north of the city's downtown district, the Johnson City Public Library is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. As a component unit of the city, the library receives 85 percent of its funding from the Johnson City government and 6 percent from the local county government, and it generates 9 percent on its own through fines, fees, and donations.

The Johnson City Public Library sets its own budget, pays its own bills, and processes its own payroll. It has a dedicated administrative staff to handle the business of the library, a facility manager to maintain the building and grounds, and an information technology specialist who keeps the library current in equipment, software, and operating systems.

The library's facility manager takes pride in maintaining the clean, well-lit building, and all staff members go to great lengths to maintain a comfortable and inviting environment.

Staff members suggest this independence has had a direct impact on the high ratings the library has received from citizens. Concerns and problems can be addressed immediately by either the administrative staff, the facility manager, or the IT specialist, thereby limiting the service disruptions or facility maintenance issues that affect library patrons. The library's facility manager takes pride in maintaining the clean, well-lit building, and all staff members go to great lengths to maintain a comfortable and inviting environment.

The library's IT specialist diligently works to maintain the library's software and hardware. A state-mandated three-year technology plan has driven the IT specialist to look for grant money to help make the money in the library's operating budget stretch further. Computers are kept updated with uniform operating systems and programs, and the library is outfitted with wireless Internet and flat-screen monitors on all public computers.

The Johnson City Public Library also has very low turnover among staff members. Patrons are able to rely on the library staff and their abilities to answer questions about materials and technology.

Services tailored by age group and other patron preferences

Staff point to the diverse array of programs provided at the Johnson City Public Library as another key to the library's success at receiving high



For additional information about the practices described in this case study, please contact Cathy Griffith, assistant director for administrative service at Johnson City Public Library, at cgriffith@jcpl.net.

ratings from citizens for library services. Programs are available in the youth services department for all age groups—from “Two’s Company” for 2-year-olds, to “Mystery Night” for teens, to “Family Storytimes” held every Monday evening for families. The library also offers a bilingual storytime for Spanish-language patrons. In addition to these regular programs, each summer is a different adventure for youth and teens as the library presents its summer reading program. Special programs are presented every Thursday throughout the summer and are so well attended that they had to be broken up into two sessions, one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

Adults also enjoy tailored programming at the Johnson City Public Library. Book discussion groups meet for “Tales and Talk.” Local genealogists utilize the library’s Tennessee Room and local history resources to find ancestors or create a family tree. Each year special programs are scheduled in conjunction with Women’s History Month, Black History Month, and National Library Week. In addition to these programs, an outreach librarian attends community events to promote library services.

Inviting the public in

The Johnson City Public Library has a meeting center that accommodates up to 130 people and is heavily used by the community. It features state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment, large projection screens, and Internet service.

With all that they have to offer, library staff continue to communicate with patrons to gauge their satisfaction with and interest in the programmatic offerings, and staff adjust programs accordingly.