

The survey was developed by the WNYLRC Strategic Planning Committee's Survey Task Group: Justin Cronise, Heidi Julien, Sheryl Knab, Pam Jones and Nancy Kirkpatrick. The full Planning Committee reviewed and offered edits before the survey was sent out. The goal of the survey was to gather community feedback about WNYLRC programs, services, and priorities ahead of the Strategic Planning Summit to be held virtually on August 18 and 19, 2020.

Survey Methods was used as the survey platform. The survey was sent to the membership via listserv messages. Respondents did not identify themselves aside from the type of institution they work at and the position they hold there. The survey was sent to members on June 15 and closed on June 30.

The survey consisted of three questions regarding demographics, four required questions that included choices and scales, and three questions allowing open-ended responses.

Results

One hundred thirty-two people began the survey, with 96 respondents completing it. Reports were created that excluded those that didn't answer questions beyond the demographic questions (questions 1-3).

Demographics

The largest number of respondents work at academic, public, or school (K-12) libraries. Librarians constituted the largest number of respondents by primary position. (See Table 1 and Table 2 below.)

Type	Number
Academic	35
Public	21
K-12 School	21
Non-profit Special	2
Hospital	4
Public Library Systems Headquarters	7
School Library System Headquarters	3
Other	3

Table 1. Number of respondents by type of library/organization.

Position	Number
Library Director	22
System Director	4
Librarian	54
Library Assistant	2
Support staff	4
IT staff	1
Other	9

Table 2. Number of respondents by position.

Question 4: Statements describing WNYLRC

The question was “To what degree do these statements describe WNYLRC today”? Respondents were asked to select on the scale:

- Not at all
- Somewhat effectively
- Effectively
- Very effectively
- Uncertain/I don’t know

Overwhelmingly, the respondents selected “Effectively” or “Very effectively”, with percentage totals ranging from 74% to 89% for these two combined. Less than 2% responded with “not at all”. As for the “uncertain/I don’t know” responses, the highest number (15) was under “advocates on behalf of my organization”.

In comparing the responses from directors and librarians, directors scored each statement overwhelmingly “very effectively”, while librarians scored each statement closely with “effectively” and “very effectively”. (See Table 3 and Table 4)

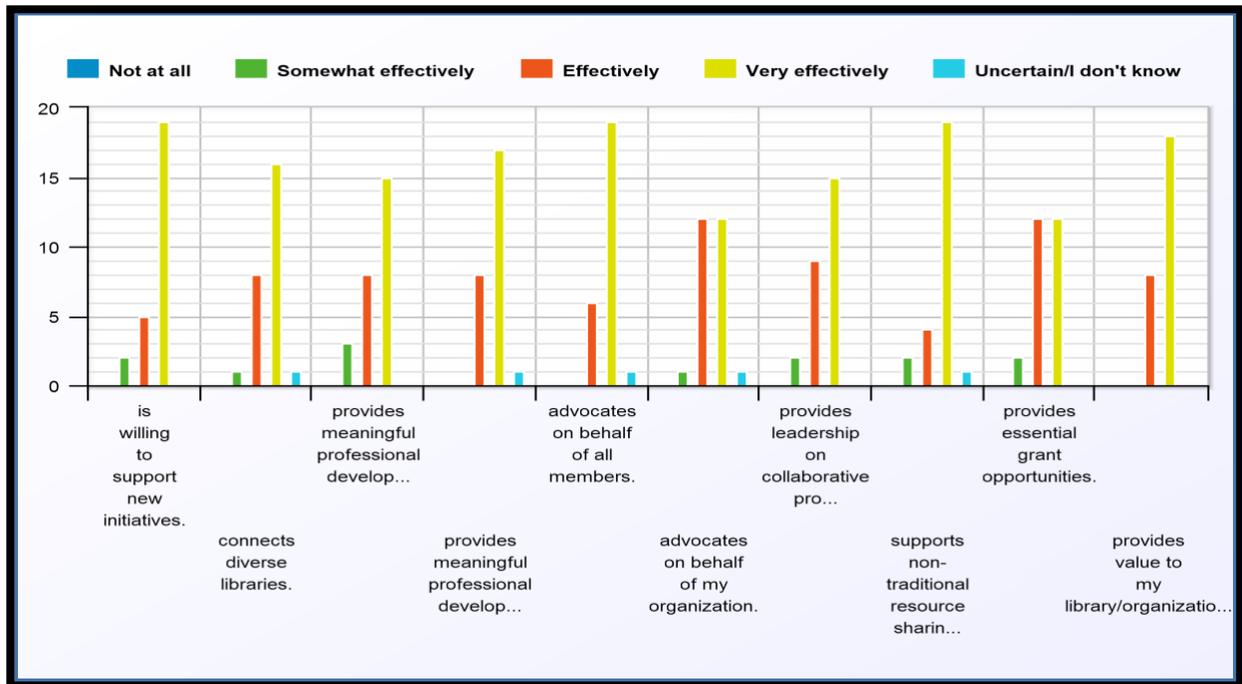


Table 3. Directors responses to question 4.

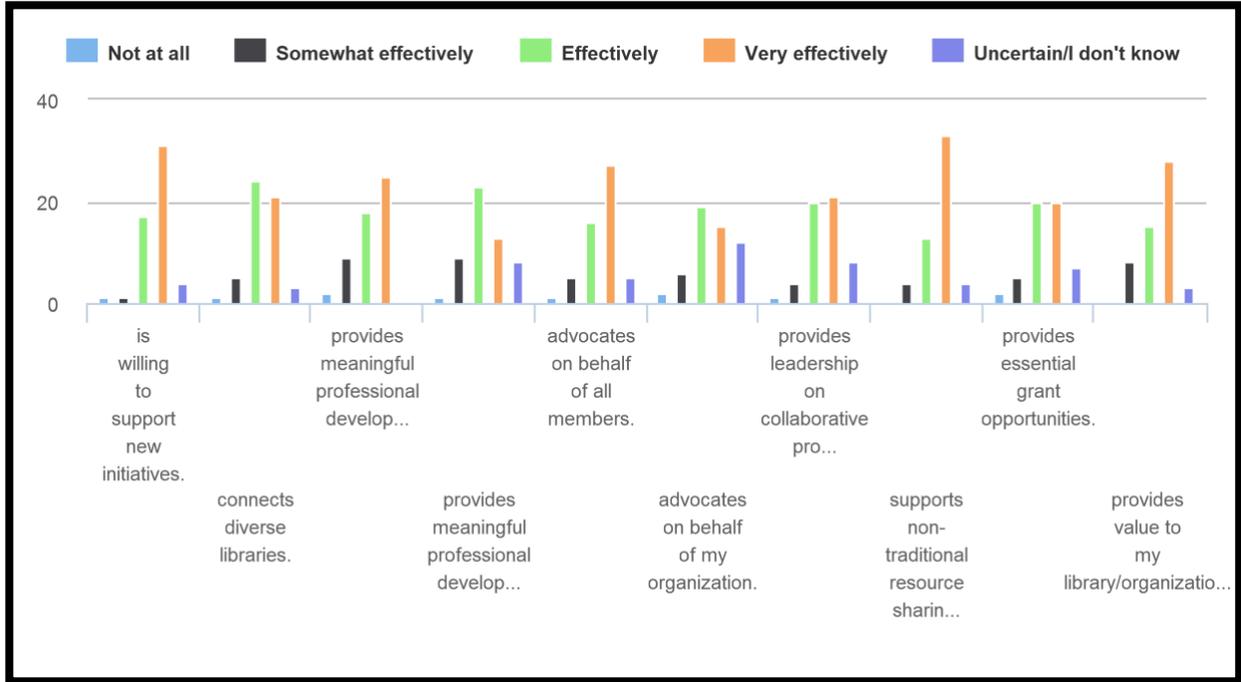


Table 4. Librarians responses to question 4.

Likewise, the combined from library assistants, support, IT, and “other” scored most statements as “effectively” or “very effectively”. These respondents had the highest number of “uncertain/I don’t know” responses. (See Table 5.)

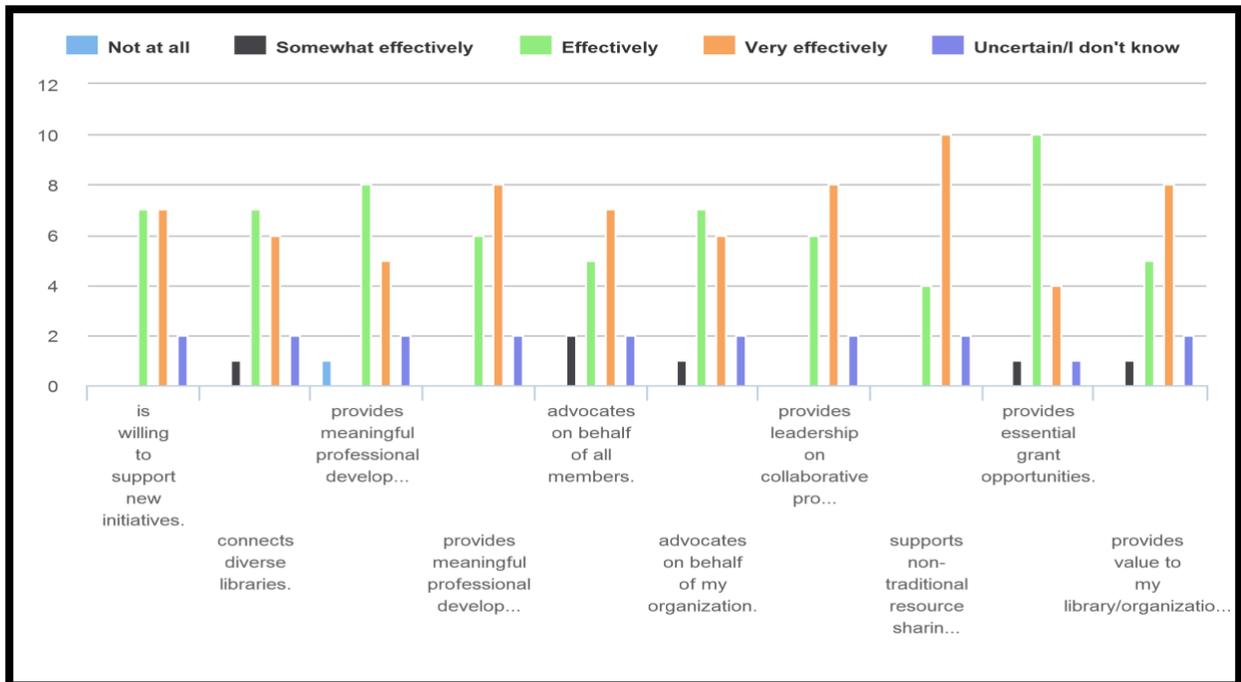


Table 5. Combined responses from library assistants, support, IT, and “other”.

Question 5: Interest in Potential Initiatives

This question asked respondents to indicate their level of interest (Not interested, somewhat interested, interested, very interested, mission critical) in the following initiatives:

- Statewide collaborative Institutional Repository.
- Statewide catalog for resource sharing of physical materials.
- Provide services during emergency situations.
- Provide increased support and expertise to address digital inclusion, digital literacies, and the challenges they create.
- Provide digital preservation services.
- Provide alternative, augmented and virtual reality services.

Overall, there is a high degree of “interest” and “very interested” for each possible initiative. Very few respondents chose “mission critical”, although the digital inclusion initiative received 12 votes for “mission critical”, and appears to be the possible initiative of interest to most. The other initiatives all received high scores for “interested”.

A point of interest is that when the answers are compared across the three sets mentioned above, all answered similarly.

Question 6: WNYLRC Services

This question asked respondents to rank 17 services offered by WNYLRC. The top four services that received the highest number of “very important” responses are:

1. Library Advocacy
2. Professional Development Services
3. Grants offered by WNYLRC
4. Ask the Lawyer

The services with the highest responses of “I don’t know about this service” are:

1. Collaborative LibWizard
2. AcademicSHARE
3. Empire Archival Discovery Cooperative
4. InfoPass

Overall, the services are all of some level of importance to all the respondents, keeping in mind that some services are for specific types of libraries/organizations. (See Table 6.)

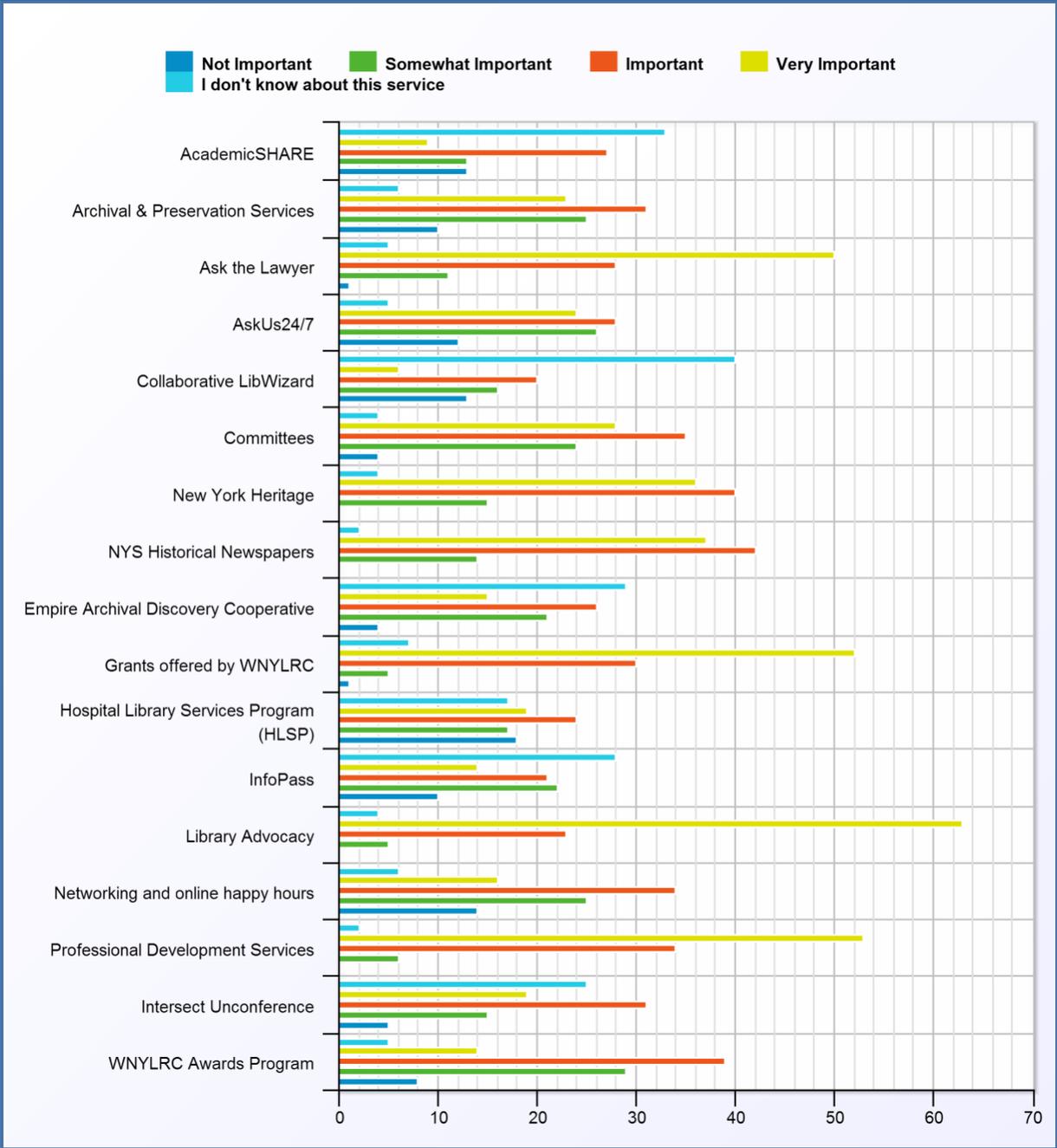


Table 6. Answers by all respondents.

Question 7: Ranking of Challenges

Respondents were asked to rank challenges facing their library/organization on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the most challenging and 10 being the least challenging. The list included:

- Funding
- Maintaining appropriate staffing
- Broadband issues
- Redefining service models
- Re-imagining and improving space
- Ongoing relevance of your library/organization
- Finding qualified candidates for jobs
- Ability to support staff participation in outside activities and professional organizations (e.g., conferences, committee participation)
- Collections management
- Declining usage

The ranked challenges from the overall survey are:

1. Broadband issues (14.40%)
2. Finding qualified candidates for jobs (11.62%)
3. Ability to support staff participation in outside activities and professional organizations (10.96%)
4. Collections management (10.91%)
5. Declining usage (10.80%)
6. Re-imagining and improving space (9.78%)
7. Redefining service models (9.29%)
8. Ongoing relevance of your library/organization (8.78%)
9. Maintaining appropriate staffing (8.29%)
10. Funding (5.18%)

Responses from Directors and Librarians ranked broadband issues as their top challenge, while the responses from Support Staff identified declining usage as their top challenge. Broadband issues ranked second for Support Staff. Librarians ranked finding qualified candidates as their second ranked challenge, while Directors ranked collections management second. (See Tables 7, 8, and 9)

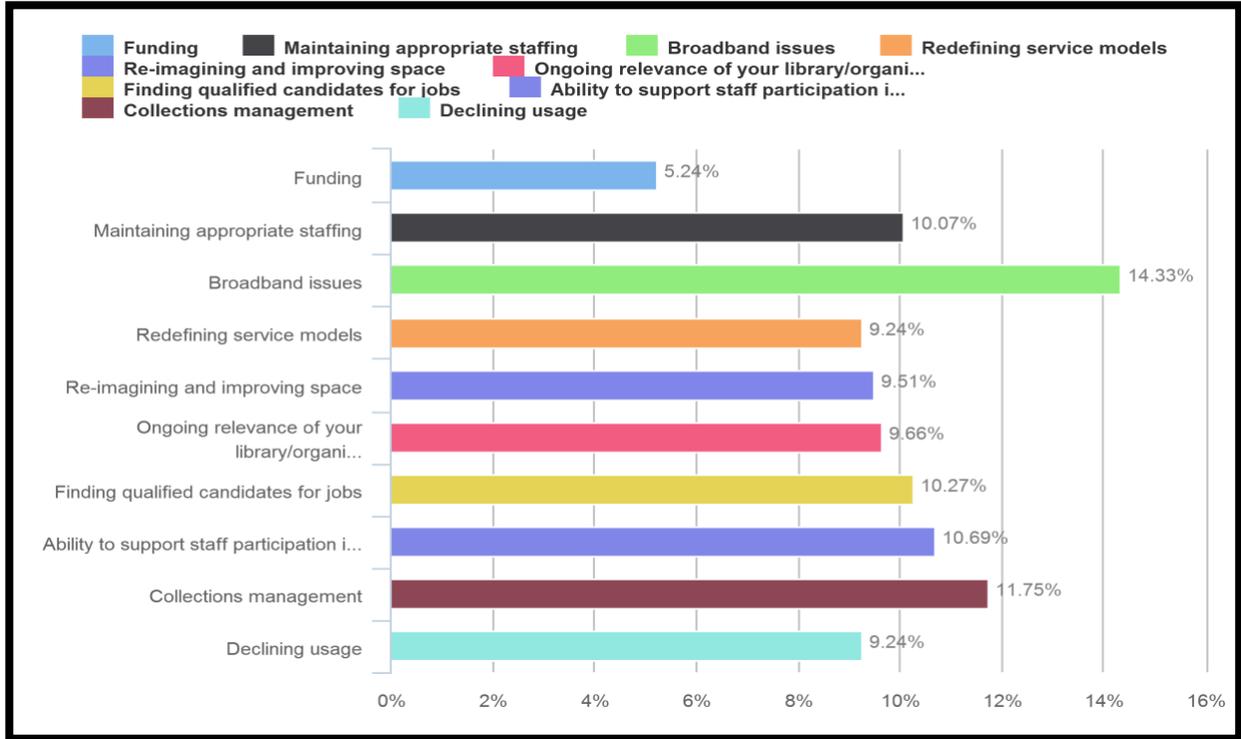


Table 7. Responses from Directors: Challenges

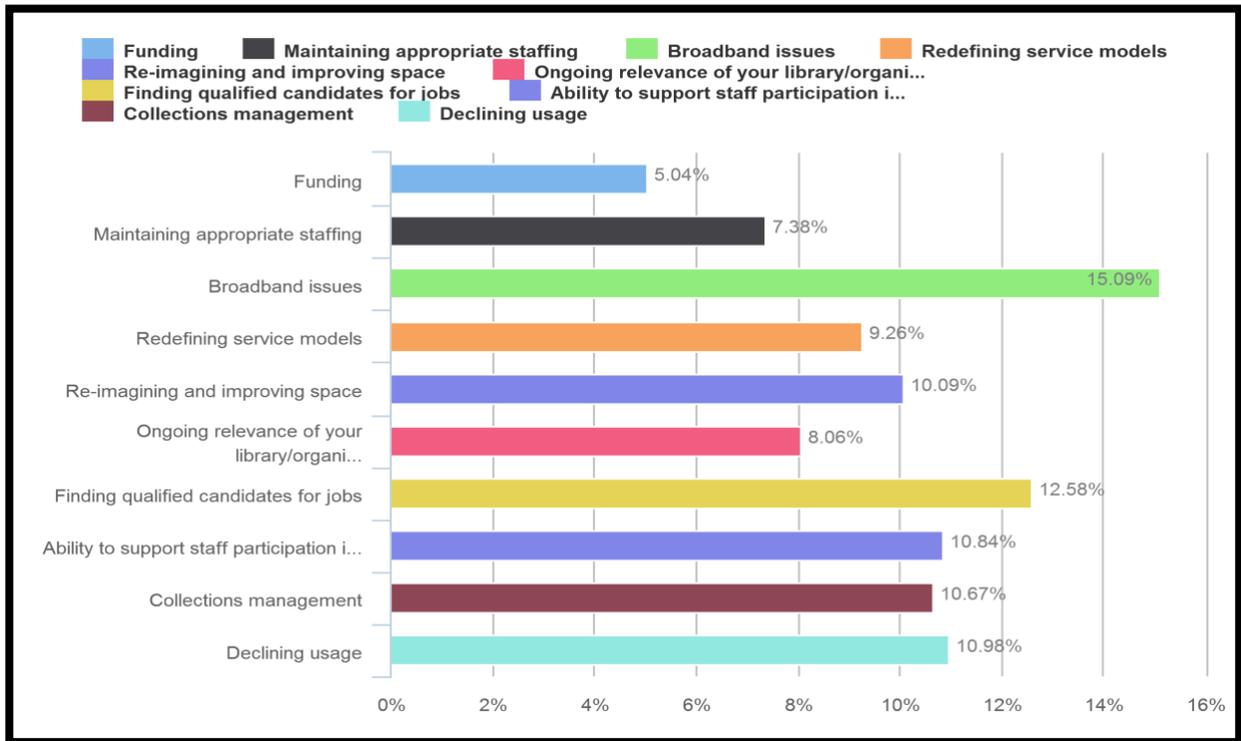


Table 8. Responses from Librarians: Challenges

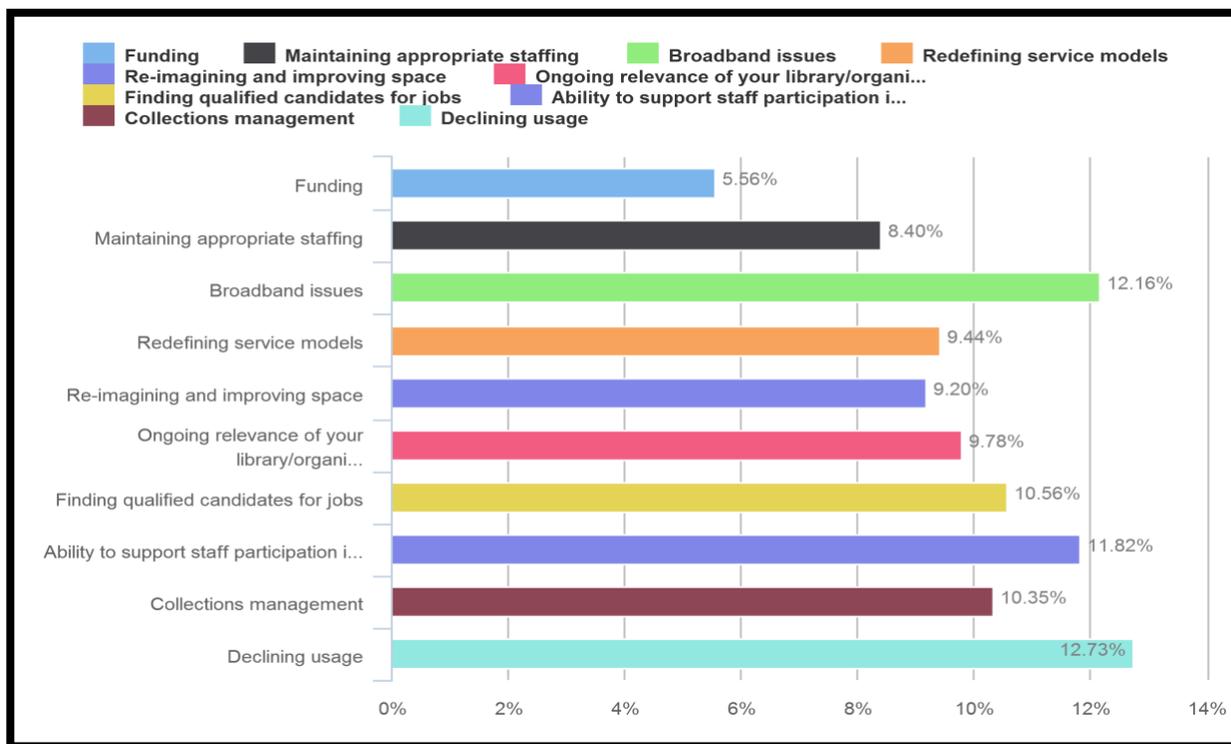


Table 9. Combined responses from library assistants, support, IT, and “other: Challenges

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Recurring themes present in the response to “what are your aspirations for your library?” are:

- Respondents frequently mention the need to improve existing online services and resources to accompany in-person services.
- Respondents are concerned that funding will continue to be reduced. Advocacy for funding will be important.
- Redesign and/or renovate physical spaces.
- Improve DEI efforts by creating inclusive programs and collections.
- Respondents desire to maintain or increase staffing.

The call for the continuation of advocacy was a common theme in responses to the question “what roles can WNYLRC play in supporting your organization over the next three years?” WNYLRC should also continue offering professional development, especially online. School librarians in particular asked that more professional development offerings be provided online during the time they are at school. School librarians aren’t easily able to travel to WNYLRC for training, but taking an hour to participate online during their day at school is possible.

The final questions asked respondents “is there anything else you would like WNYLRC to know?” Many offered thanks to the staff at WNYLRC for all they do on their behalf. The recent online offerings during the pandemic are greatly appreciated. All in all, keep up the good work!

Conclusion

The challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic are certainly evident throughout the responses. While broadband issues are the top-identified challenge and funding was the lowest-identified challenge, the concern about reduced funding was very evident in the open-ended responses. Advocacy is a benefit of WNYLRC membership that many appreciate. The move to online networking and professional development is recognized; this should be considered important and continue moving forward, along with holding committee meetings online to make it easier for participation.

This survey confirms that WNYLRC services are valued by the members, and that WNYLRC is on the right track when identifying the challenges that their members are facing as well as continued opportunities for service and collaboration. WNYLRC, like many other organizations today, should continue to offer online access to training and meetings, as this will be key to keeping members informed and engaged in this pandemic culture and probably well beyond.