

# BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

## LIBRARY SURVEY FINDINGS

*April 2013*

### Executive Summary

---

The Global Libraries Initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is exploring a variety of strategies to accelerate change in US public libraries. To guide this work, the team solicited information and ideas from a wide range of stakeholders in the library field using an online survey. This memo is intended to provide brief highlights from the survey; the full report, “Summary of Stakeholder Survey Results” is attached.

To understand needs, opportunities and roles for libraries in the future, five plus years from today, an online survey was distributed to as broad and diverse a library constituency as possible via library support organizations as well as to more than ten well-respected bloggers. The survey generated over 4,200 responses between October 2012 and January 2013. Results from the initial 3,195 responses were used to develop the “Summary of Stakeholder Survey Results” in December 2012. Additional survey responses received after December were tabulated and no significant differences from the initial analysis were found.

Via the survey, the Global Libraries Initiative was interested in gaining high-level insight into three questions:

1. What is the role of the future library when information will be primarily accessible via a device?
2. What are key attributes of a successful future library?
3. How might support and funding from the Global Libraries Initiative most effectively help libraries develop these attributes?

Below is a summary of the most frequently provided responses to the survey questions.

- What is the role of the future library when information will be primarily accessible via a device?
  - *“Navigating and curating information”* was most frequently mentioned; and,
  - *“Trained librarians”* was cited as most important.
- What are key attributes of future library?
  - *“Trained librarians”* and *“Visionary, effective leadership”* were ranked ordered as two most important attributes.
- How might support and funding from the Global Libraries Initiative most effectively help libraries develop these attributes?
  - *“Collaborative efforts between/among libraries to test innovative new services and share results with field”* and *“Training and skills development for library workers”* were both most frequently mentioned **and** rank ordered highest in response to this question.

As a follow up to the survey, the Global Libraries Initiative conducted focus groups with library leaders in the US to discuss the survey findings and identify topics and opportunities to explore more deeply with additional library stakeholders in the spring and summer of 2013.