Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

News

Library Service & Social Wellbeing Data Release

How do people describe their ideal community? In what ways do public library directors create a sense of belonging through service?

Qualitative data, as well as complete transcripts from over two hundred community residents interviewed in eight remote rural US communities are now available for use by researchers, policy makers, and librarians.

The field data were collected as part of the Rural Library Service and Social Wellbeing project (https://rurallibraries.org/). This three-year research and application work is funded, in part, by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and is led by the Southern Tier Library System (NY) in partnership with Pioneer Library System (NY), New Mexico State Library (NM), Association of Rural and Small Libraries, and REFORMA. Through mixed methods research conducted by public library workers, the project answers:

- Are public libraries a component of social wellbeing in resource poor geographies?
- If so, what practices do they employ?

Public library practitioner/researchers Margo Gustina, Hope Decker, and Eli Guinnee worked with local library directors in remote rural localities who had a public library in town, but no other formal community anchor (including schools, major medical facilities, or large-scale employer), to set up interviews with community residents. Through 114 interviews, the team was able to record conversations with hundreds of people on their feelings about and experiences of community.

These transcripts were coded and analyzed and in concert with survey and statistical data inform *Libraries Build Pathways to Wellbeing* findings and associated evidence-based resources. The research team has continued to work with local library partners to translate these findings into evidence-based resources for public library practice which leads to positive social wellbeing outcomes. These resources are concurrently under development and testing for usability and relevance.

More information on the Rural Library Service & Social Wellbeing project, findings, resources,

and open data for use can be found on our project site: https://rurallibraries.org, through our project registration on Open Science Framework, or by emailing principal investigator Margo Gustina: research@rurallibraries.org.

Use the data! Make new discoveries!