A Profile of Users of Public Music Libraries in Israel/

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**Abstract** 

In recent years, public music libraries in Israel have undergone a process of renewal

and development from the technological aspect as well as from the aspect of

collection development. This study attempts to delineate a profile of patrons of public

music libraries in Israel and to identify patterns of behavior, needs and preferences of

the typical user of the services that are offered by these libraries. The study of this

special group of users and their needs has never before been carried out in Israel and

its findings will hopefully contribute to the further improvement of services offered

by these libraries.

The survey, carried out from January through March 2002, was of the 144 users of

five public music libraries in Israel. A cluster method of sampling was used: each

library was regarded as a single cluster and the user population within each cluster

(library) was randomly sampled. The 3-part questionnaire was handed out and

answered in writing by users while they were using library facilities. It included 27

questions and was geared to examine three groups of variables: demographic

variables (age, general education, musical education, occupation, country of birth,

place of residence, languages), variables relating to behavior (goal of visit to library,

manner of visit to the library, activities while listening, utilization of aids while

listening, manner of choosing discs) and musical preferences (musical style, type of

composition, performer, format, language of composition). The questionnaire was

drafted by this author, in consultation with experts in the field, in view of the goals of

this study. The questionnaire was finalized after it was pre-tested within the

framework of these libraries.

Findings show that the average user is male, aged 19-29, born in Israel and living in

the city where the library is situated. The average user has not had a formal musical

education and is usually either a student or is employed. The average user visits the

music library 6-7 times a month in order to discharge more than one purpose. The average visit was approximately half an hour long. If the user decided to listen to a recording on the premises, it was usually for 15 minutes. Users borrow between 2 and 3 discs – this is also true of the number of disks listened to on the premises. The average user tends to read while listening, mostly material dealing of the work chosen. Usually the user comes alone and does not hold a subscription to the library. Musical preferences are decided on the basis of more than one criterion. The most frequent criteria are the performer (singer), group/band and musical style. The most favored musical styles are classical, rock, pop and Israeli popular music.

These finding enabled the compilation of two types of users: the first type includes a high percentage of young Israeli-born soldiers and employed persons. The second type includes a high percentage of older, unemployed people, who are either new immigrants or non-Israeli born who have been in the country for a considerable length of time. The difference between the two types is in the relative amount of library use and all that this use entails. In general, the first type of user is the more active user.

Several recommendations are offered, based on the findings of this survey. Since it was wound that a high percentage of users of public music libraries are residents of the city in which the library resides, it is recommended that music libraries should be established in additional localities. Further, there is a need to publicize and market these libraries so as to enlarge their audience. It is also recommended to establish areas for group listening alongside stations for individual listening, so as to allow discussion and humming or singing along – a behavior that was discerned among many of the participants. The population using music library facilities can also be divided into two distinct groups, those who have a formal music education and those who do not, with many essential differences between the two groups. This finding has prompted the recommendation that libraries divided their physical space in two. One section should be devoted to the group with musical expertise, with a prevailing atmosphere of quiet, served by librarians having a formal music education and house the reference collection for music. The second section would be devoted to the general population and house the popular recordings collection, as well as the "group listening corners" described above. The librarians serving this section should be young and knowledgeable in contemporary music and modern music trends. This

section would attract the younger population and should include reading material on

the latest issues of discs, popular performers, etc. Continued research in the area of

music library use is recommended, in order to further establish the findings of the

present research and to develop new approaches to the operation of public music

libraries in Israel.

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