Section 1: Executive Summary
Overview of the Methodology

ETC Institute was founded in 1982 by Dr. Elaine Tatham to help local governments gather data from residents to enhance community planning. During the past 25 years, the firm has grown from a small one-person company to a national corporation. Since its founding, ETC Institute has completed research projects for clients in 46 states. This includes thousands of surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder meetings. ETC Institute is one of the nation’s leading community–based market research firms. We help corporate business, governments, library, and non-profit organizations gather and interpret data from the general public and special interest groups about a wide range of issues.

ETC partnered with the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library to conduct a statistically valid Community Interest and Opinion Survey to help establish priorities for facilities, programs, collections, and services. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Topeka and Shawnee County. The survey was administered by mail, phone, and web.

ETC worked extensively with the Topeka and Shawnee County officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to help establish priorities facilities, programs, collections, and services.

A seven-page survey was mailed to a random sample of 3,200 households within Topeka and Shawnee County. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed each household that received a survey also received an automated voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed ETC began contacting households by phone. Those who had indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 800 completed surveys. ETC met that goal with a total of 844 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 844 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision rate of at least +/-3.3%.

The following pages summarize major survey findings.
Facilities and services of the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library that respondent households have visited or used in the past 12 months: Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondent households have used the Public Library at 1515 SW 10th Avenue over the past 12 months. Other facilities or services of the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library respondent households have used include: Library website (52%), and bookmobiles (30%).

Purpose for which respondent households used or visited Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library: Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondent households have used or visited the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library to check out a book. Other purposes include: Checked out a movie (45%), asked a librarian a question (43%), viewed art work in gallery (35%), and picked up materials on hold (34%).

Main purposes for which ADULT members of respondent households used the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library over the past 12 months: Based on the sum of respondent households’ top three main purposes, (72%) of adult members of the household used the Library over the past 12 months to check out a book. Other main purposes include: Checked out a movie (28%), and picked up materials on hold (16%).

Main purposes for which YOUTH members of respondent households used the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library over the past 12 months: Based on the sum of respondent households’ top three main purposes, (26%) of youth members of the household used the Library over the past 12 months to check out a book. Other main purposes include: Checked out a movie (14%), and played and explored in the Kids Library (9%).

Statements that best represent how often the Topeka & Shawnee County Library at 1515 SW 10th Avenue has been used by respondent households over the past 12 months: One percent (1%) of respondent households visit the Topeka & Shawnee County Library on a daily basis. Other visitation levels include: Several times per week (5%), once per week (25%), once per month (32%), and a few times per year (36%).

How respondent households rate the following services that the Topeka & Shawnee County Library provide: Based on the sum of respondent ratings who were either “very satisfied” or satisfied” with services, (96%) of respondent households were satisfied with the courteousness of staff. Other similar levels of service satisfaction include: Knowledge of staff (95%), cleanliness and maintenance of the Library (95%), books for adults (93%), requesting an item to be held (91%), books for children (90%), and hours of operation (90%).
Services from the list in question #6 respondent households feel are most important for the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library to provide: Based on the sum of respondent households top four choices, (62%) feel that books for adults is the most important service for the Library to provide. Other most important services for the Library to provide include: Books for children (32%), books for teens (17%), knowledge of staff (16%), and movie (DVDs) (15%).

Reason(s) respondent households did not use the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library at all or more often during the past 12 months: Thirty-eight percent (38%) of respondent household reasons for not using the Library at all or more often over the past 12 months is because they were too busy. Other reasons include: Used the internet instead (25%), location is not convenient (19%), bought or rented materials elsewhere (14%), lack of knowledge about services (13%), and did not have what respondent wanted or needed (12%).

Respondent level of agreement with the following list of statements that could describe the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library: Based on the sum of respondent households who either “strongly agree” or “agree,” (90%) agree that the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library provides high quality services. Other similar levels of agreement include: Important provider of literacy services in the community (90%), accessible to community organizations (89%), important provider of services to youth and teens (89%), provides opportunities for self-improvement (86%), a source for community pride (83%), and a great value for my tax dollars (81%).

Ways respondent households currently receive information about the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library: Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondent households currently receive information about the Library by visiting or calling the Library (55%). Other ways respondents currently receive information about the Library includes: Library website (43%), Library newspaper (42%), word of mouth (39%), e-mail or e-newsletter (39%), and newspaper (38%).

Ways listed in question #10 respondent households most prefer to learn about Library services: Based on the sum or respondent household top three choices, (32%) most prefer to learn about Library services by the Library website. Other ways respondents most prefer to learn about services include: E-mail or e-newsletter (32%), visit or call the Library (32%), and Library newspaper (31%).
Principal roles and services that respondent households feel that the Library should emphasize in the next few years: Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondent households feel that the Library should emphasize providing services that support reading and learning over the next few years. Other principal roles include: Provide resources for reading, listening and viewing pleasure (45%), promote reading and literacy (45%), and provide services for children to enter school ready to learn, read, write, and listen (44%).

Respondent household priority actions that the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library could take to continue and improve current services and facilities as well as address new emerging service needs-Learning KIDS: Based on the sum of respondent households who stated the service or facilities should be a “high priority” or “medium priority,” (89%) of household state that it is a priority to expand services and programs for teens that support literacy and a love of reading. Other priorities include: Offer programs to encourage more parents to read to their children (88%), offer services for parents and kids for out of school learning (88%) and provide services to allow children from birth to age five to enter school ready to learn, read, write, and listen (86%).

Respondent household priority actions that the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library could take to continue and improve current Library services and facilities as well as address new emerging service needs-Learning ADULTS: Based on the sum of respondent households who stated the service or facilities should be a “high priority” or “medium priority,” (87%) of households state that it is a priority to expand services and programs for adults that support literacy and a love of reading. Other priorities include: Provide services to help people learn skills, start a new career, and connect with others of similar interests (78%), provide more computer training classes (77%), provide experiences for people to test, use, and learn the latest technological innovations (75%), provide English learning programs to Non-English speaking residents (73%), and help adults develop new job skills for the changing workplace (72%).

Actions from the list in question #13 respondent households feel are the most important for the Library to provide: Based on the sum of respondent households top four choices, (43%) of households state that it is most important for the Library to provide services to allow children from birth to age five to enter school ready. Other most important actions for the Library to provide include: Expand services and programs for adults that support literacy and a love of reading (33%), programs to encourage more parents to read to their children (31%), and expand services and programs for teens that support literacy (30%).
How respondent households feel about potential actions the Library could take to continue to improve current services and facilities as well as address new emerging needs—COMMUNITY: Based on the sum of respondent households who stated the services or facilities should be a “high priority” or “medium priority,” (93%) of households stated that it is a priority to serve as a source of reliable and trustworthy information. Other priorities include: Provide quiet places for reading and individual study (89%), foster a reputation as being a safe and neutral place to discuss tough issues (83%), provide a one-stop place for community information (81%), continue offering meeting spaces to community organizations (81%), and continue to provide a gathering spot for teens after school (80%).

How respondent households feel about potential actions the Library could take to continue to improve current services and facilities as well as address new emerging needs—CONTENT: Based on the sum of respondent households who stated the services or facilities should be a “high priority” or “medium priority,” (92%) of households state that it is a priority to provide materials that support reading at all stages of life (large print, audiobooks, etc.). Other priorities include: Provide popular resources for reading, listening and viewing pleasure (90%), collect and preserve local history (85%), provide more downloadable content (eBooks, music, movies etc.) (83%), provide services and programs for local authors to create and contribute content to the Library’s collection (78%), and provide services that anticipate reading and viewing interests and automatically requests materials based on those interests (71%).

How respondent households feel about potential actions the Library could take to continue to improve current services and facilities as well as address new emerging needs—EQUITABLE ACCESS: Based on the sum of respondent households who stated the services or facilities should be a “high priority” or “medium priority,” (73%) of households state that it is a priority to expand online services. Other priorities include: Expand service delivery methods that include convenient book and item pick up centers throughout the community (66%), expand service delivery methods to home or work (including mailing of requests) (61%), and develop small branch libraries in community facilities (57%).
Actions from the list in question #15 respondent households feel are most important for the Library to provide: Based on the sum of respondent household top four choices, (39%) feel that the most important action for the Library to provide is materials that support reading at all stages of life (large print, audiobooks, etc.). Other most important actions include: Provide popular resources for reading, listening or viewing pleasure (37%), serve as a source of reliable and trustworthy information (28%), and to provide quite places for reading and individual study (26%).

Respondent satisfaction with the overall value their household receives from the Topeka & Shawnee County Library: Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondent households were very satisfied with the overall value their household receives from the Topeka & Shawnee County Library. Other levels of satisfaction include: Somewhat satisfied (27%), neutral (8%), somewhat dissatisfied (2%), and very dissatisfied (2%).

How respondents rate the importance of the Library to their household: Fifty percent (50%) of respondent households rate the Library as extremely important to their household. Other levels of importance rating include: Somewhat important (41%), not very important (8%), and not at all important (2%).

How respondents rate the importance of the Library to the future of Topeka & Shawnee County: Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondent households rate the importance of the Library to the future of Topeka & Shawnee County as extremely important. Other importance ratings include: Somewhat important (23%), not very important (2%), and not at all important (1%).