



Library employee Christina Canterbury, right, checks out a book for a young patron at Liberal Memorial Library. All staff were unanimous in saying that children are the most prevalent demographic seen at the library. L&T photos/Elly Grimm

By ELLY GRIMM

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For many, the local library is akin to a sanctuary and offers a quiet and good place to do work or read the next bestseller. This was recently proven with a new poll from the Pew Research group that says that two-thirds of Americans actively engage with their local libraries.

This trend has definitely proven true at Liberal Memorial Library. On average, more than 100,000 people visit the library every year, and patronage to the library keeps going up.

Who patronizes Memorial Library?

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One of the things the library prides itself on is the availability of technology for the patrons' use. Phil Lee, PR director of Liberal Memorial Library, said even with all of this available, they still have traditional library functions.

"It's still very, very much important to the community here," Lee said.



According to assistant library director Paulina Poplawska, the most prevalent demographic seen at the library is children. The younger patrons also enjoy the services offered at the library.

"There's always a lot of things that you can do here," said patron Oscar Cruz.

Poplawska considers children their largest demographic because they get the adults in their families out of the house and to the library.

"I also think it's a lot of stay-at-home moms who come just to get out," she said. "Our adult circulation is more than the children's, but kids are the ones who predominantly come to more programs."

However, another large demographic that Lee discussed was Liberal's immigrant population. He said the immigrant population uses the library for use of their computers along with other forms of help.

“They’re coming down here to try to get info and we’re here to lead them,” he said. “Especially since we have five bilingual staff members that are incredibly helpful, and it’s helped to connect with a lot of the immigrant population here.”

It’s also not only books and computers that are offered by Liberal Memorial Library – there are also many DVD selections and magazines for patrons.

“People come in and use the DVDs a lot, and they’re constantly coming in and checking out DVDs,” said Lee. “Part of it also has been the economy. We’ve had the recession the last couple of years, and people were looking for cheaper and more inexpensive ways to entertain themselves, and the library is one of the greatest resources to do that.”

The library also offers several other services, especially with the children’s section. There are movies shown, arts and craft days and board games that the children play.

“I also think that we have started getting people that have never come to the library before, especially young families,” said children’s librarian Casandra Norin. “I think the word is starting to get out with us being a family place with the library. We’ve had people who have never been in the library in their life come in to attend this program, and it’s great.”