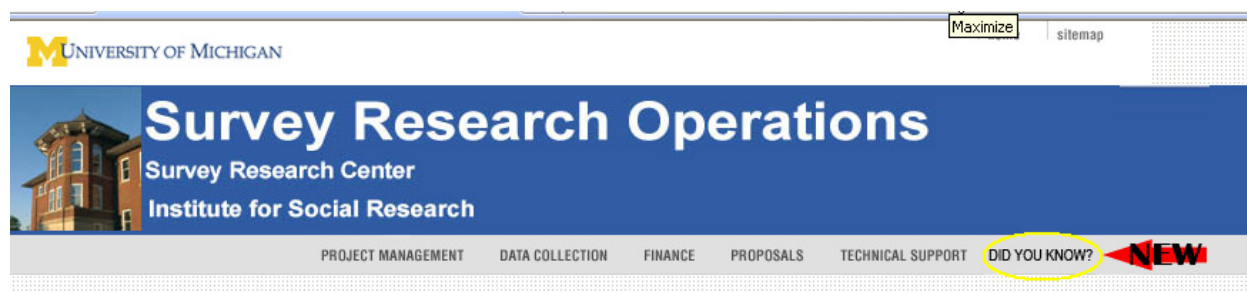


## Happening in SRO

You can find this issue of “Happening in SRO” and all similar updates on the SRO Intranet home page. Look for the Section titled: Did You Know?



### Mark the Date!

#### SRC All-Staff Meeting

**May 21st, 11:30-1:30 PM**  
**Rogel Ballroom in the Union**

Topics to include: research findings from one of our SRC program areas, an update from our SRC Director and more (TBA). Additional details will be forthcoming from SRC. Please plan to attend.

## The Health and Retirement Study

Heidi Guyer

The Health and Retirement Study is a longitudinal survey of a representative sample of Americans over age 50. The study first began in 1990 and is supported by the National Institute on Aging (part of the National Institutes of Health) and the Social Security Administration. It is designed to provide reliable data on the decisions, choices, and behaviors of people as they age and to respond to changes in public policy, economy and health. The study is multi-disciplinary and focuses on four broad topic areas— income and wealth, health and use of health services, work and retirement, and family connections. Additionally, the HRS has become a model and hub for a growing network of harmonized longitudinal aging studies around the world, including England, Ireland, 20 European Union countries, Israel, Mexico, China, Japan, South Korea, and India.

The year 2012 marks the eleventh wave of main data collection that SRO has conducted for the Health and Retirement Study. Close to 250 field and SSL interviewers completed interviewer training and were certified to conduct physical measures and collect biomarkers in April 2012. By the end of April 2013, the 11th wave of data collection will come to a close with close to 22,000 completed interviews. Due to the hard work of many individuals the study will, once again, achieve the final response rate goal of 89%. Throughout 2013, the team will devote their time to completing 2012 data collection, gearing up for 2014 data collection, conducting several mail surveys as well as an on-line survey, and conducting several new initiatives as well. The next round of data collection will begin in the spring of 2014—less than a year away!

## From the Archive

Kelly Chatain

Near and dear to my heart is Project 12, "The Public Library and the People: A National Survey Done for The Public Library Inquiry," which was a key component of a five-part study that remains one of the most comprehensive ever conducted on the public library system. The American Library Association (ALA) applied to the Social Science Research Council in 1946 "to gain an objective understanding of the conditions and prospects of public librarianship"<sup>1</sup> and to provide information for professional discourse. This included determining the library's relationship with the community and how that community met its information needs.

It is most interesting because the survey placed the library in a larger framework of mass communication, one in which it remains today. At the time it was radio, films, newspapers, magazines and the newer, cheaper mass book printing. And television was on the horizon. The ALA knew this and it was a key consideration for the study, "It may not be an exaggeration to say, as some informed people do, that the electronic transmission of words, sounds and signs will prove to be as powerful and radical in influence on our social and political life as was the invention of printing in the sixteenth century."<sup>2</sup> It is as true today as it was in 1946.

The survey confirmed assumptions that public library usage was low; only 18% of the respondents had visited a library within the year, with direct correlations to income and education (library users had higher levels of both). It also confirmed that radio (9 out of 10 people listened to the radio regularly) and newspapers (69% read one every day) were main conduits for news and information. For specific questions on actively looking for information, the survey found that experts, service agencies, and books were the most common means of finding answers, and that public libraries were considered by only a third of the respondents as a potential source.

Suggestions for strategic planning for libraries based on this study were controversial, the main question being do libraries tailor their services to those who use it or do they improve outreach to those in the community who could benefit more from the resource? And how do libraries work with new methods of mass communication? These questions persist today and will into the future, as technology and information continue to shape our society and we continue to try and understand it.

The details:

Directed by Charles Metzner

Funded by the Carnegie Corporation (\$200,000 for all five parts)

Conducted October-November 1947

30 minute face-to-face interviews

1151 respondents; Sample of adults 21 and over in private households in 80 communities.

Survey Research Center  
University of Michigan

October 4, 1947

QUESTIONNAIRE --- STUDY 12

ASK EVERYONE

In this survey we are trying to find out how people get any information they want. We would like to know where people find out about things and how they go about getting their information.

1. For instance, suppose you wanted to find out something about how to paint or fix up your house (apartment) yourself. How would you go about it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1a. (if "from a book") Where would you get the book?

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Scope, Background, and Intellectual Context of the Public Library Inquiry, Douglas Raber and Mary Niles Maack, *Libraries & Culture*, Vol. 29, No. 1, The Public Library Inquiry: Reminiscences, Reflections, and Research (Winter, 1994), pp. 26-48, University of Texas Press

<sup>2</sup> Public Library Inquiry scope document, SRO Archive, Project 12