Military Libraries:
Their Roles and Importance

MFRI

Introduction

Introduction

In 2004, the Military Family Research Institute was asked by the Office of the Secretary of Defense to review military libraries around the world. In 1996-1997, the Department of the Navy conducted an audit of Navy libraries, and began closing selected locations. In April 1998, Congress, in the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) section of the fiscal year 1999 Defense Authorization Bill, directed the Secretary of Defense to "suspend further library closings" and report to the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on National Security about the status of military libraries. Accordingly, an October 1998 memo from the Secretary of Defense placed a moratorium on library closings and ordered a review of military libraries.

Since each service branch conducts audits of library quality and services, and the Status of Forces Surveys measure overall satisfaction with military libraries, this project complemented those data by focusing on satisfaction with specific facets of library services and their perceived impact on retention and quality of life. The current study addressed whether the current state of the department's libraries and the level of services provided by them are perceived as: sufficient to meet the needs of the military community; duplicating services readily available from local public libraries; adequately staffed with the right number and mix of sufficiently trained people to provide quality service and keep pace with technology; and whether the facilities, equipment, technology and materials are adequate to support customers and staff.

Method
Overview

The research strategy was a multi-method combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. First, background information was collected from the head librarians for each branch of service during interviews and meetings. Based on the study goals and the information gathered, critical facets of library usage and satisfaction were identified. Researchers at the MFRI developed measures and protocols to be used in focus groups of military members and dependents (both clients and non-clients of libraries) conducted at CONUS and OCONUS locations for all services.

Interviews with key informants
Procedure

Extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone with the head librarian for each branch of

service, followed by a conference in Quantico, VA, to solicit suggestions for design features of the focus groups. During the interviews and conference, the librarians were asked about the social and psychological roles of the libraries, educational support, deployment support, and concerns with the future of the libraries.

Focus groups with military members and dependents
Participants

Participants were 142 military service members or spouses from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, representing a variety of ranks, positions and tenures. Data were gathered at 16 military communities around the world; eight of which were located outside the continental United States. Refer to Table 1 for a full demographic breakdown by location. This was not a random or representative sample of the U.S. military, but it did include a diverse array of members and experiences from many locations around the world.

Recruitment was conducted by Purdue University's Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) in conjunction with advice from local military points of contact regarding specific dates and the most appropriate methods for publicizing and registering participants. Techniques included posters, flyers, webpage announcements, emails, announcements at meetings, and word of mouth. Interested individuals either made reservations with the local military point of contact or with MFRI directly via email or a toll-free telephone number.

Measures

Consistent with the goals of our study, we chose a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative instrument (Appendix A) was designed to solicit assessments of specific facets of military libraries, including whether (and if so, how often) they used the base libraries, and measures of satisfaction with different aspects of the military libraries (i.e., convenience of operating hours; staff knowledge; staff customer service; building condition; location, quality of material available, amount of materials available; internet access; children's programs; educational programs; professional development resources; distance learning resources; online portals and databases; and support for home schoolers.) Additionally, measures of demographic information (e.g., age, gender, marital status, service tenure, rank) were administered.

For the qualitative data, focus groups were conducted in order to obtain rich information about individuals' experiences with base libraries and their perceptions of how these experiences have affected their attitudes toward the military, intentions to re-enlist, and other affective and behavioral responses. Participants discussed differences between military and civilian libraries; library usage and activities; the impact

military libraries have on retention; the role, social aspects, benefits and drawbacks of military libraries; and recommendations for improving military libraries. Appendix B contains the protocol used for the focus groups.

Procedure

Focus groups typically included five to ten participants and lasted between one and two hours. A MFRI researcher served as the group facilitator and a note-taker was also present. The room was closed to prevent interruptions and participants used an alias (of their choice) throughout the course of the discussion to ensure their anonymity. To begin, the facilitator introduced him- or herself and explained the nature of the MFRI. The facilitator then stated that participants would be asked to discuss their impressions

Table 1

Installation	Location	Branch	# Spouses	# Member	# Dual	# Did not indicate status
Hanau	Germany	USA	1	3	0	
Friedberg/Giessen	Germany	USA	0	6	0	
Baumholder	Germany	USA	0	6	0	
Spangdahlem	Germany	USAF	2	14	0	6
Camp Butler	Japan	USMC	0	8	1	
Camp Pendleton	CA	USMC	3	2	2	
San Diego	CA	USN	0	9	4	
Camp Lejeune	NC	USMC	0	6	1	
Atsugi	Japan	USN	5	2	0	
Yokosuka	Japan	USN	4	4	0	
Cannon	NM	USAF	3	5	0	
Kaneohe Bay	HI	USMC	6	14	0	1
Wright Patterson	OH	USAF	1	5	0	
Little Rock	AR	USAF	0	4	3	
Norfolk	VA	USN	1	5	2	
Fort Lewis	WA	USA	3	0	0	
			29	93	13	

Totals by service	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine	Did not indicate service	Grand total
	22	44	31	32	13	142

of the impact of the Quality of Life (QoL) services on their lives (libraries were one of several services assessed; findings regarding other services are described in "The Social Compact" by Meyer, Welch, MacDermid, & Weiss; manuscript in preparation.). Participants provided written informed consent and were strongly encouraged to respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not share what was discussed with anyone outside of the focus groups. Recording devices were turned on and participants gave verbal consent to being recorded.

After completing the discussion portion of the focus group, the quantitative and demographic measures were distributed and completed. Following the session, all participants were debriefed and questions were answered.

Findings

Findings

Key informants

First, head librarians indicated that educational support is provided by all libraries; however, the classes and programs vary from library to library. All libraries provide access to online portals and databases for the patrons. They also support home-schoolers; however, assistance is not frequently requested and may not be well developed. All librarians also mentioned activities such as story telling and discussion groups and book signings for popular books. Also, classes for adults vary depending on the needs of the community, but often include things such as financial management, tax assistance, and computer training. Other classes support lifelong or distance learning. Finally, they provide support for DoD schools as well with both the collections and teaching materials.

All librarians mentioned providing support for deployed service members. During peace-keeping deployments, temporary libraries are set up and stocked. For contingency operations and war-time operations, kits of best-sellers, DVDs, and periodicals are sent based on the number of personnel. Additionally, a growing number of libraries provide webcams or video cameras for parents to be taped reading a book for their child(ren) who can then read along at home.

All the librarians cited funding as the biggest concern for delivery of quality library services. Lack of funding leads to poor collections, poor staff (quality and/or quantity), poor facilities, and poor collections – all of which undermine the libraries' ability to provide quality service to the military members and their families.

Finally, the librarians described libraries as a place that is non-threatening and neutral, where rank is not salient, and where service members to do their own research and study. It is both a place where the families can go together and where others can go to get out of the house. Overseas libraries are particularly vital due not only to their providing access to English language material, but also as a place for people to meet and mingle, and a place for them to contact others in the States via email and webcams.

Quantitative results

Library usage data and library facet satisfaction data from the quantitative measures (Appendix A) are graphed below. The number of participants included in each group is indicated in parenthesis on the left axis.

As the top bar in Figure 1 shows, over 70% of the research participants had used military libraries. Although these studies were designed to complement rather than supplant the Status of Forces Survey (SOFS) data (since it would be unfeasible to conduct focus groups with a fully random representative sample of the military and their dependents), these responses were compared to the most recent SOFS results. Focus group participants reported slightly higher library usage than the 53% reported in the most recent SOFS. (Differences between these and SOFS results may be due to the fact that these results include both members and dependents.) Participants stationed OCONUS were substantially more likely to report having used military libraries than members stationed at CONUS locations (75% vs. 58%, respectively). The SOFS similarly indicated higher OCONUS than CONUS usage (71% vs. 49%, respectively). Overall rates of usage by service ranged between 50% and 85% (again showing a similar pattern to the SOFS data; Army: 58%; Navy: 36%; Marine Corps: 54%; Air Force: 65%), but the differences between OCONUS and CONUS locations varied by service. OCONUS usage percentages were higher than CONUS for Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel, but the reverse was true for the Marine Corps.

The following graphs indicate satisfaction with multiple facets of military libraries. Unfortunately, detailed SOFS data are not available for comparison.
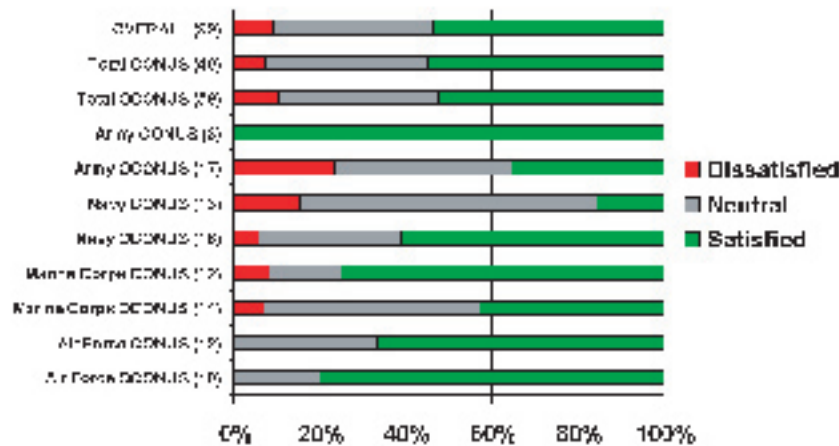
Base library usage
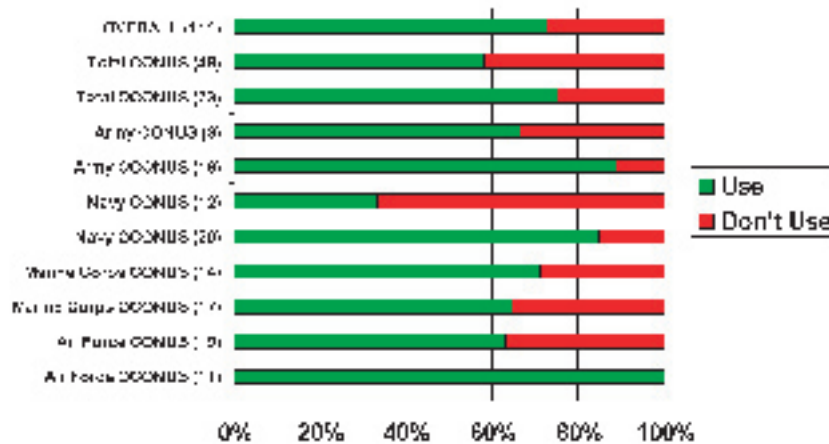
## Satisfaction with Convenience of Operating Hours
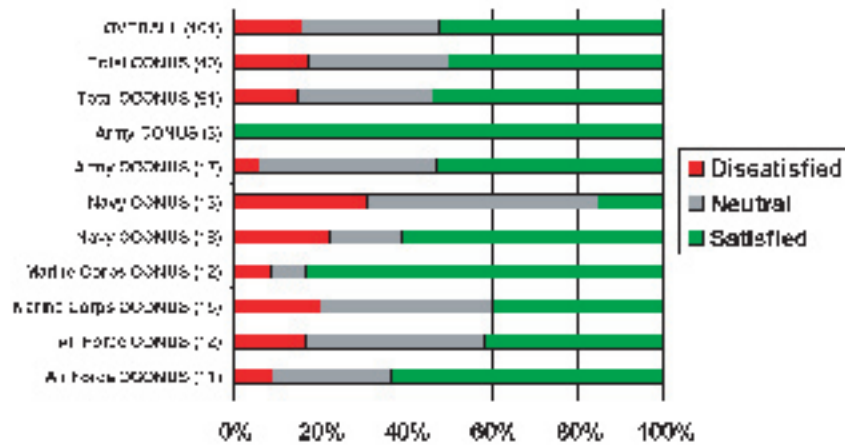
Overall, half of the participants were satisfied with library operating hours, and another third were neutral. Differences between CONUS and OCONUS locations were not significant, but there were some variations between branches of service.

## Satisfaction with Staff Knowledge

Over half of the participants were satisfied with staff knowledge, and 10% were dissatisfied. Differences between CONUS and OCONUS locations were not significant, but there were some variations between branches of service.

Satisfaction with Staff Customer Service
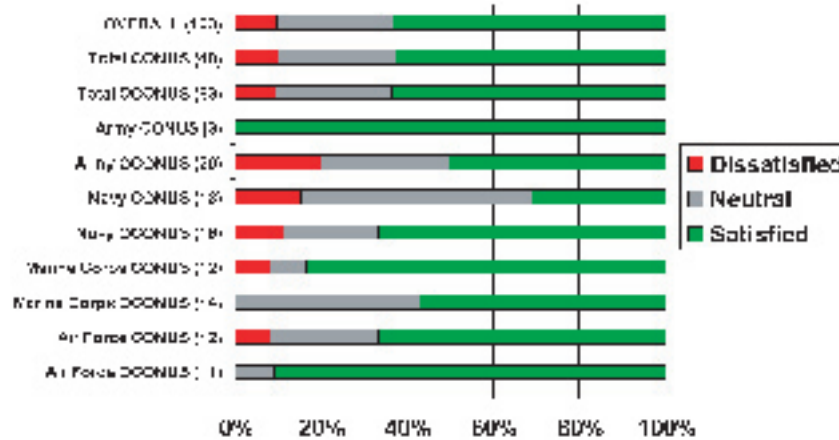
Overall, nearly 2/3 of the participants were satisfied with customer service from the staff, and CONUS and OCONUS levels were not significantly different.

Satisfaction with Building Condition
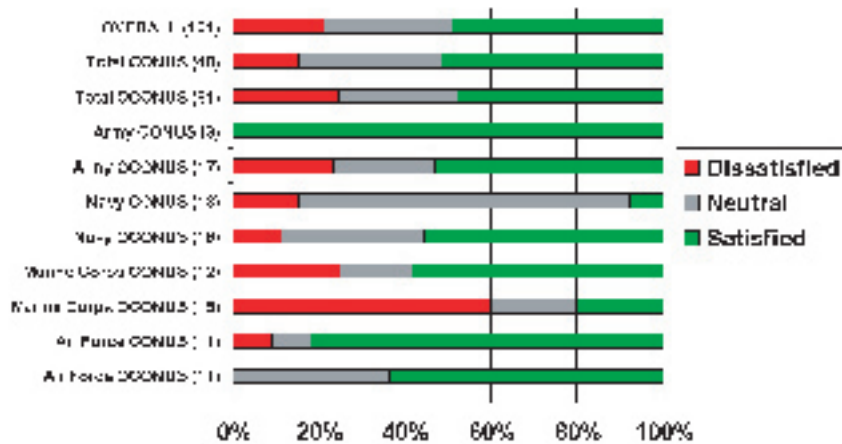
Overall, half of the participants were satisfied with the physical condition of the library building. OCO-NUS participants were slightly less satisfied and more dissatisfied than CONUS participants, and there were significant variations between the services.

Satisfaction with Location
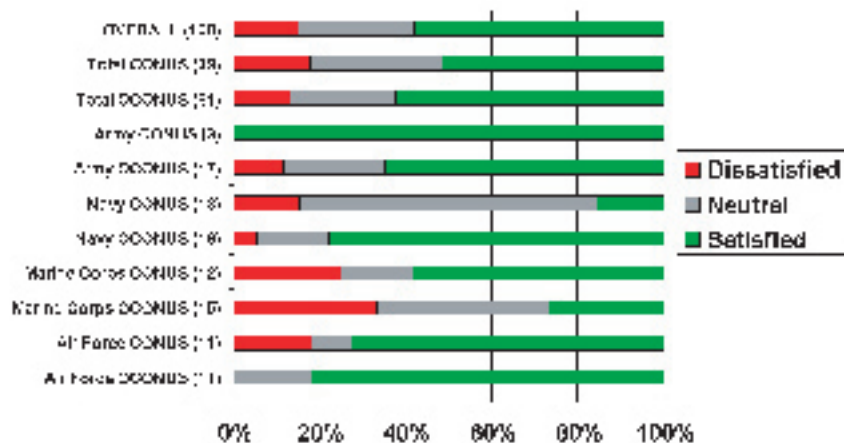
Over half of the participants were satisfied with the library's location on the installation, with OCONUS participants being slightly more satisfied and less dissatisfied than CONUS participants. Again there were significant differences between the branches of service.

Satisfaction with Quality of Materials Available
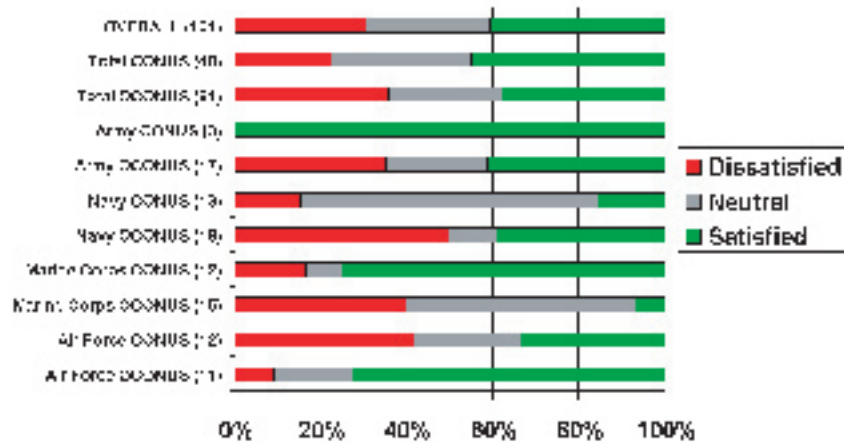
Forty percent of the participants were satisfied with the quality of materials, but a third were dissatisfied. OCONUS participants were less satisfied and more dissatisfied with material quality than CONUS participants. Significant differences exist between the services.

Satisfaction with Amount of Materials Available
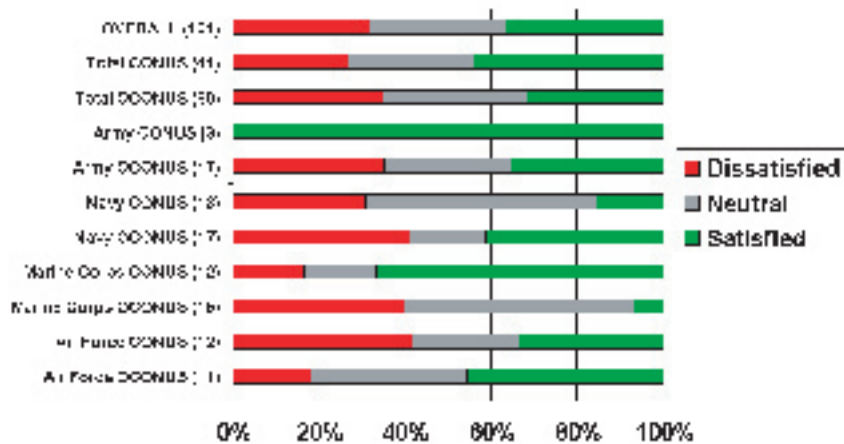
Overall, participants were about equally satisfied and dissatisfied with the amount of library materials available. Again OCONUS participants felt less satisfied and more dissatisfied with the quantity of materials available to them. Some differences exist between services.
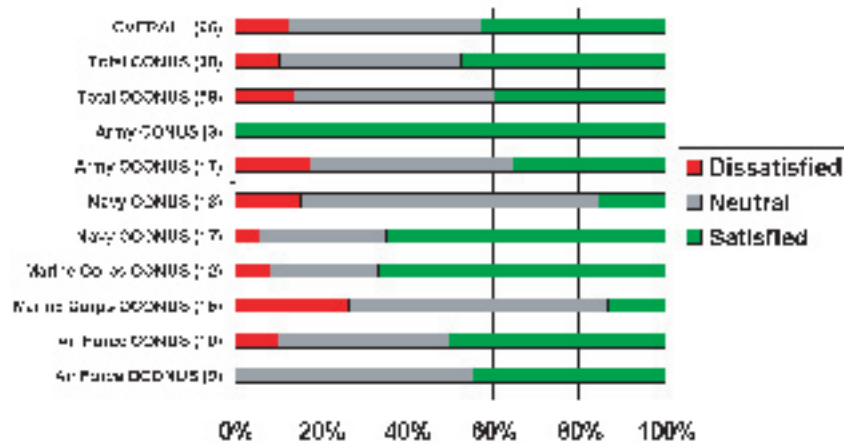
Satisfaction with Internet Access
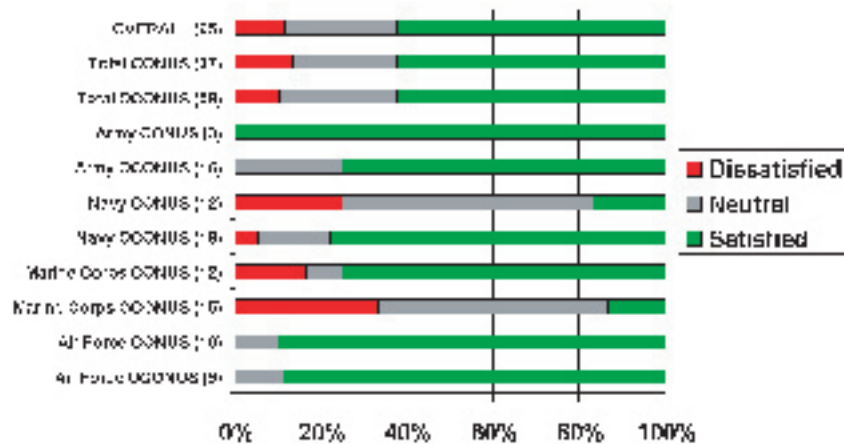
Internet access was satisfactory to nearly 2/3 of the participants, with similar ratings in both CONUS and OCONUS. Differences do exist between services, with no Army or Air Force participants expressing dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction with Children's Programs

Approximately 10% of the participants were dissatisfied with children's programs, with the remainder evenly split between satisfied and neutral. CONUS and OCONUS ratings were similar, with slightly higher satisfaction for CONUS participants.

Satisfaction with Educational Programs
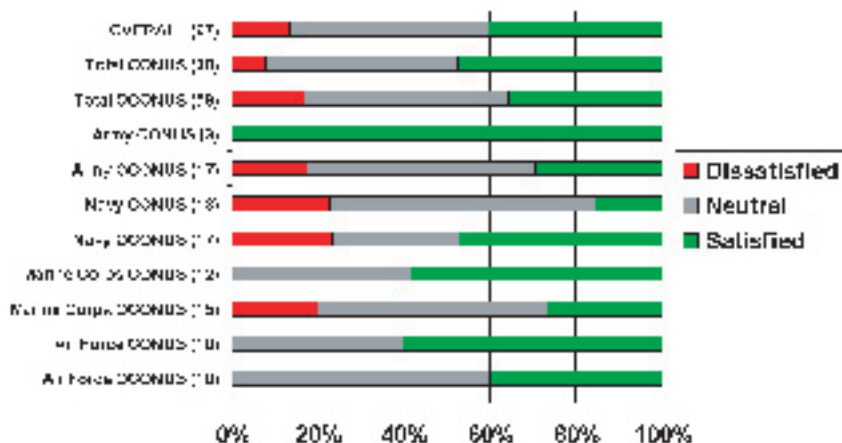
Most people expressed neutral feelings toward educational programs at the libraries, and 40% were satisfied. CONUS participants were slightly more satisfied and less dissatisfied than OCONUS participants, and some differences did exist between the services with no Air Force participants expressing dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction with Professional Development Resources

About half of the participants expressed neutral feelings toward the professional development resources, and a third were satisfied. CONUS participants were more satisfied and less dissatisfied than OCONUS participants, and differences did exist between the services.

Satisfaction with Distance Learning Resources

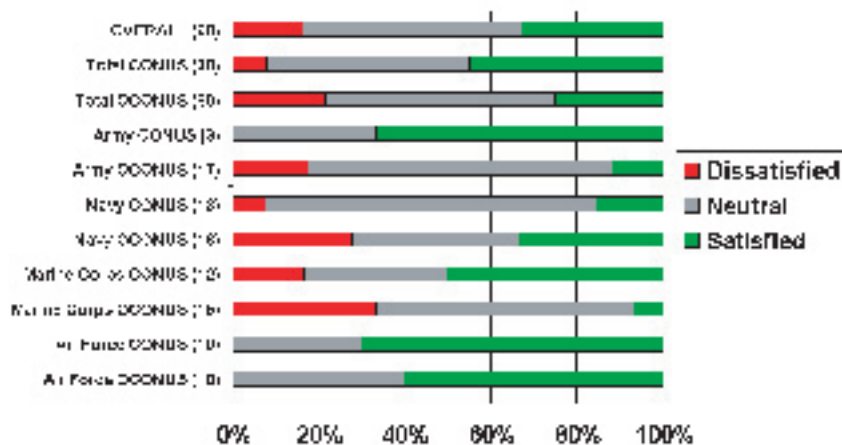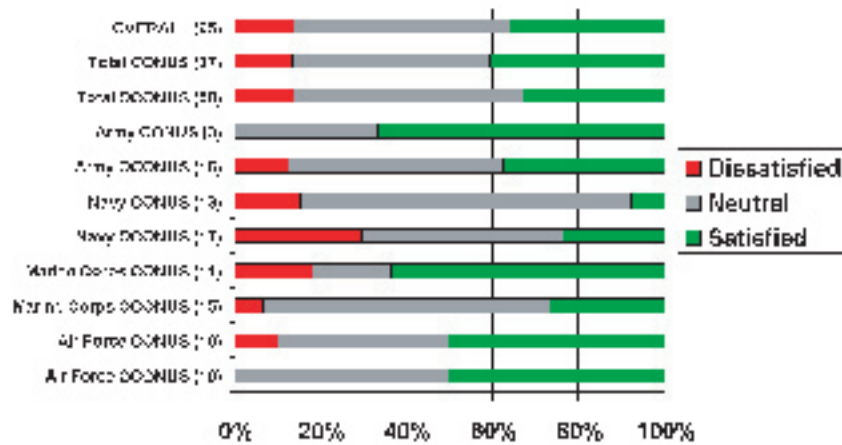About half of the participants expressed neutral feelings toward distance learning resources, and over a third were satisfied. CONUS participants were slightly more satisfied than OCONUS participants, and small differences existed between the services.

Satisfaction with Online Portals and Databases
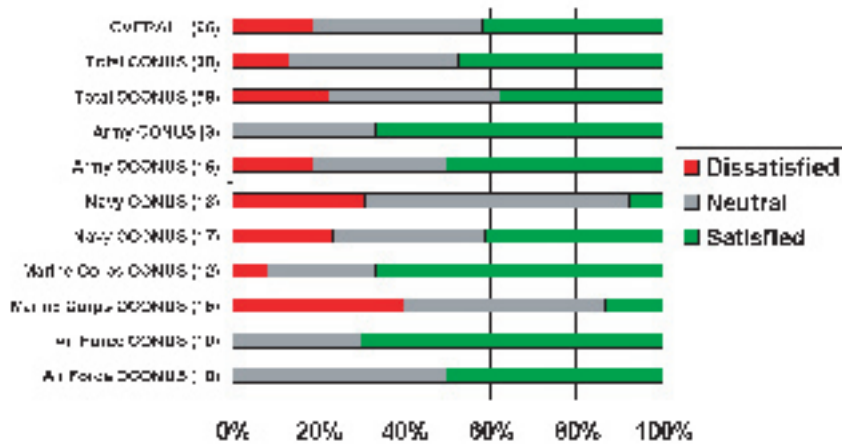
Approximately 40% of the participants were satisfied and another 40% were neutral about online portals and databases. CONUS participants were more satisfied and less dissatisfied than OCONUS participants, and there were significant differences between the services.

Satisfaction with Support for Home Schoolers
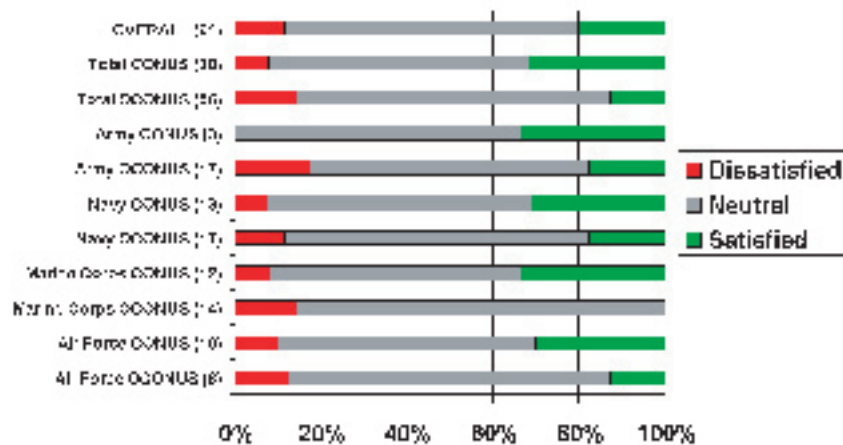
The majority of participants were neutral in their evaluations of support for home-schoolers. CONUS participant were more satisfied than OCONUS participants but little other variation existed between services.

Qualitative results

The following summarize focus group responses to each research question (listed in Appendix B). Overall themes, variations between CONUS and OCONUS locations, and variations across services are pointed out as applicable. A comprehensive list of responses detailing answers by location and branch of service (e.g., Army CONUS, Army OCONUS, etc.) can be found in Appendix C.

Role of the military library

Many participants felt the role of military libraries is the same as that of civilian libraries. Overall, they perceived the function of libraries as providing leisure and research materials (e.g., books, magazines, references, movies, CDs, internet access) for children and adults, as well as a quiet place to work or study. Access to technology was a common theme in participants' descriptions of the role of military libraries – internet, email, CD, DVD, etc. Children's materials and programs were also a common theme. OCONUS participants generally mentioned more extensive functions than CONUS participants, including providing information about the local area. Marine Corps and Air Force personnel also indicated the importance of research materials and support for military career development.

Social aspects of the military library

Overall, participants perceived the social role of the library as providing a place for adults and children to meet and read or work together. Several mentioned that this helps keep people out of trouble. OCONUS participants in particular felt that a major social aspect of the library pertained to children's programs.

Although most agreed with the social roles above, a small number of OCONUS Marine Corps personnel indicated that the libraries did not have a social function since they should be used for individual learning and development.

Library usage activities

Overall, participants reported using the library for books, magazines, research and study materials, and children's programs. Additionally, OCONUS participants mentioned using it for internet access and foreign language training and as a place to get out of the house or temporary lodging. Marine Corps personnel tended to mention professional activities at the library, where the other services mentioned both professional and recreational activities.

Benefits of the military library

Overall, participants were pleased with the services offered at the libraries including internet access, DVDs and CDs, and children's programs. OCONUS participants mentioned the availability of English language materials as a benefit, and Army personnel mentioned that libraries were considered the primary source for local information when arriving in a new location. Marine Corps personnel discussed the benefits of test preparation materials, and the Air Force participants were pleased with the adequacy of computer resources.

Drawbacks of the military library

Overall, participants perceived the main drawbacks of military libraries as being small, outdated, and often in a poor location. OCONUS participants from each service mentioned not having sufficient internet or computer availability.

The impact of military libraries on retention

Overall, most participants did not perceive military libraries as having a direct impact on retention, although some Marine Corps OCONUS personnel indicated that it was an important service. Only Air Force OCONUS personnel felt that the availability of libraries on base has a positive effect on retention; it shows members and families that the military cares about them.

Military vs. civilian libraries

Participants in several groups indicated that military and civilian libraries are very similar. Some considered military libraries to be older and smaller with fewer resources, but Marine Corps and Air Force participants indicated that military libraries have more materials related to the military and services (e.g., internet access) are free.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Participants from the Army and Navy recommended not having military libraries in CONUS unless they can compete with the quality and facilities of bookstores and public libraries. Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force participants recommended changes to the physical layout of the libraries, so that different functions could be separated (e.g., have a separate computer room or children's room.) Marine Corps and Air Force CONUS participants recommended better advertising of library programs and directing programs toward people of all ages (especially teenagers.)

Conclusions

The MFRI was asked to conduct a study to determine whether:

    o The current state of the department's libraries and the level of services provided by them are sufficient to meet the needs of the military community;

    o They duplicate services readily available from local public libraries;

    o They are adequately staffed with the right mix of people and numbers to provide quality service;

    o Staff training is sufficient to keep pace with technology;

    o The facilities, equipment and library materials are adequate;

    o The right technology is in place to support customers and staff;

    o There is a better way to deliver DoD recreational library programs.

Based on the data, participants in this research perceived that military libraries fall short compared to civilian libraries on their size and collection, especially in CONUS where public libraries are readily accessible. However, military libraries are not solely a duplicate of civilian libraries, in that the military libraries provide materials specific to the military culture and professional development items not available in civilian libraries. Military libraries are perceived as a primary source of information for members and/or families during a Permanent Change of Station Move. These services were valued by both members and dependents from all branches of service. Also, children's programs are considered to be a very important service provided by military libraries that are either not available or not as good at civilian libraries. Finally, the books, magazines, and movies provided to deployed units by military libraries are morale-boosting (and not available from civilian libraries.)

Few focus group participants were dissatisfied with the quality or quantity of the staff at military libraries; however, the head librarians felt that staffing and staff training continues to be a major challenge. The majority of recommendations for improving library services were related to improving the facilities, equipment, and materials. Internet and computer access was considered by most participants to be a central part of the role of the military library, and many indicated that more computers are needed in the libraries. Similarly, the quantity and quality of materials were among the areas of highest dissatisfaction.

Both the satisfaction questionnaires and focus group responses yielded some interesting differences between branches of service. For example, the Marines on average are a younger demographic than the other services, so they expressed different needs/wants. They expressed the most interest in personal and professional development materials, such as research and test preparation materials. Also, Naval commands may be more separated than those in other services which would again lead to different needs and findings. For example, there are mini-libraries on ships which may contribute to the base library usage being the lowest of the four services. Although it is important to share "best practices," each branch of service should continue to tailor their libraries to the needs of their service members and their families.

Although these data are organized by CONUS/OCONUS and branch of service, it should be mentioned that some of the OCONUS participants were in non-foreign locations (e.g., Kaneohe Bay, HI). The expectations for services of a military library OCONUS in Hawaii may be different than those of the OCONUS libraries in Germany, where the library may be the primary source of English language and cultural adaptation material.

Finally, even though only a few participants indicated a direct link between providing good libraries and retention, the majority of participants used the libraries and considered the services they provide to be important to their quality of life. Continued funding and an awareness of the importance of the military library at the installation commander level will allow libraries to provide quality services to military members and their families.

This work provides insight into the perceptions of military members and dependents regarding military libraries by using a method that captures depth rather than breath, and contributes significantly to the understanding of why some people feel the way they do about libraries. However, caution is urged to not interpret this as an overall grade or indication of military library quality due to the small sample sizes. Nonetheless, the specific services (and/or locations) are encouraged to use these findings in addition to the SOFS and other audit data to focus on topics that were identified as shortcomings and either address them or conduct more widespread data-collection in order to determine the frequency or severity of any issues.

Appendices

Appendix A

Use of Services: Base Libraries

Have you *ever* used the library at this base? (*Mark one*) Yes No Not available

SKIP THE NEXT TWO QUESTIONS IF YOU HAVE <u>NEVER</u> USED THE BASE LIBRARY.

In an average month, how many times do you (or your family) use the base library?

_____ times per month

On average, how much time do you or your family spend at the base library for each visit?

_____ hour(s) per occasion

Please indicate how satisfied you are with the following areas of the base library:

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Convenience of operating hours	1	2	3	4	5
Staff knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Staff customer service	1	2	3	4	5
Building condition	1	2	3	4	5
Location	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of materials available	1	2	3	4	5
Amount of material available	1	2	3	4	5
Internet access	1	2	3	4	5
Children's programs	1	2	3	4	5
Educational programs	1	2	3	4	5
Professional development resources	1	2	3	4	5
Distance learning resources	1	2	3	4	5
On line portals and databases	1	2	3	4	5
Support for home schoolers	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Base Libraries

Issue: Your perceptions of differences between base and off-base libraries.

How do you think the base library is different from a public one?

Issue: Your perceptions of ways in which libraries impact different aspects of your lives.

What do you consider the role of the base library?

(Probe: Place to gather and meet? Psychological or social function of the library?)

What do you use the library for?

How does the base library impact your professional life?

Issue: Your usage of and satisfaction with off-base libraries.

What do you like most about your base library?

What do you like least?

Why do or don't you use the base library?

Has anything to do with this service ever affected your (your spouse's) intention to stay in the military? If so, how?

Appendix C

Role of the military library

Army CONUS

Participants indicated that the role of the military library was the same as that of a civilian library.

Army OCONUS

Participants indicated that the role of the military library is to provide free reading resources, audio, video, email, internet, quiet space for studying and reading, and access to information.

Navy CONUS

Participants indicated that the role of the military library is to provide computers and internet, even though those services are available elsewhere.

Navy OCONUS

Participants indicated that the role of the military library was the same as that of a civilian library; namely to provide leisure materials, internet access, DVDs, and children's programs.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants indicated that the role of the military library is to maintain a collection comparable to that of a civilian library, provide internet access, research materials, instructional classes, CLEP tests, and inter-library loan services.

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants indicated that the role of the military library is to provide a study area, children's readings, and professional readings. Participants also indicated that libraries are a major family readiness issue in their role of providing support for families when troops are deployed.

Air Force CONUS

Participants were unable to describe the role of the military library.

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated the role of the military library is to provide local community information (especially when overseas), support professional (i.e., military careers) and personal learning (i.e., college classes), provide internet, email, and readings for children and research and reference materials.

Social aspects of the military library

Army CONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is to provide a location for study groups to meet and for children to gather instead of playing in the streets.

Army OCONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is to provide a location for children to read.

Navy CONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is to provide services (e.g., computer, books, recreation room) in one location so that people can socialize (which is fun and keeps people out of trouble.)

Navy OCONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is to provide a location for social interactions, especially for children.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is provide a location for people to "hang out."

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is to allow people to meet others, social network, and have group meetings. Other participants indicated that there is no social role; libraries are a quiet, individual place.

Air Force CONUS

Participants indicated that the military library does not fulfill a social role; the café and post office generate the social business on post.

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated the social role of the military library is to provide a location for children to gather and spend time.

Library usage activities

Army CONUS

Participants did not indicate specific activities for which they used military libraries.

Army OCONUS

Participants indicated they used military libraries primarily for movies, internet, research, information, quiet time, children's programs, and a place to go to get out of the house.

Navy CONUS

Participants indicated they used military libraries primarily for books, research, and children's activities.

Navy OCONUS

Participants did not indicate specific activities for which they used military libraries.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants indicated they used military libraries primarily for books, movies, research projects, professional courses, and children's programs.

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants indicated they used military libraries primarily for computers, research, and internet. It was considered particularly important for people in temporary lodging.

Air Force CONUS

Participants did not indicate specific activities for which they used military libraries.

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated they used military libraries primarily for research, internet access, movies, college information, CLEP study guides, and foreign language tapes.

Benefits of the military library

Army CONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library are free DVDs, email access, no late fees, children's daily reading programs, and the availability of military information when first arriving in a new location (they were considered the primary source of such information.)

Army OCONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library include internet access, movies, travel books, paperback book swap, CDs and DVDs, English language books (especially important when in a non-English speaking country), summer reading programs for children, computers, and research materials.

Navy CONUS

Participants did not indicate any specific positive aspects of the military library.

Navy OCONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library include internet, CDs and DVDs, quiet rooms for reading, and children's reading programs and awards.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library include books, magazines, internet, historical films and books, story hours for children, puppet shows, and free books during deployments.

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library include internet, children's reading programs, DVDs, KLEP and DANTES test preparation materials, and research materials.

Air Force CONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library include helpful staff, adequate numbers of computers, good location, and good children's programs.

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated that positive aspects of the military library include internet, late operating hours, allows people to read books without having to buy it, CLEP and DANTES test preparation materials, educational videos (e.g., Discovery Channel, National Geographic), periodicals, children's programs, and movies.

Drawbacks of the military library

Army CONUS

Participants indicated that a negative aspect of the military library is that the research materials are outdated.

Army OCONUS

Participants indicated that negative aspects of the military library include its location, small size, non "user-friendly" staff, lack of handicap accessibility, long waits for internet, limited reading materials, and small movie collection (since they can only carry movies not available for rent at the MWR video store.)

Navy CONUS

Participants did not indicate any specific negative aspects of the military library.

Navy OCONUS

Participants indicated that negative aspects of the military library include computer time limits (even when nobody is waiting), small size, outdated research materials, lack of instructions on how to use on-line card catalogs, lack of inter-library loan program, small collection, lack of assistance for computer learning, and short operating hours.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants indicated that negative aspects of the military library include its small size, small collection, and poor location on base.

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants indicated that negative aspects of the military library include far too few computers, too few military books, outdated collection, and that internet email account (e.g., Yahoo Mail, Hot Mail) access is prohibited.

Air Force CONUS

Participants indicated that negative aspects of the military library include lack of parking, not enough research material, outdated material, and poor location on base.

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated that negative aspects of the military library include long waits and time limits on internet, lack of trained personnel, dark environment, limited collection, noise generated by children playing and socializing, and lack of research materials.

The impact of military libraries on retention

Army CONUS

Participants did not believe that military libraries have an impact on retention.

Army OCONUS

Participants did not believe that military libraries have an impact on retention.

Navy CONUS

Participants did not believe that military libraries have an impact on retention.

Navy OCONUS

Participants did not believe that military libraries have an impact on retention.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants did not believe that military libraries have an impact on retention.

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants believed that military libraries are important but do not have an impact on retention.

Air Force CONUS

Participants did not believe that military libraries have an impact on retention (but mentioned that the educational center does.)

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated that the availability of libraries on base has a positive effect on retention; it shows members and families that the military cares about them.

Military vs. civilian libraries

Army CONUS

Participants indicated that there is no difference between the roles of the military and civilian libraries, but that the military has older books.

Army OCONUS

Participants indicated that compared to civilian libraries, military libraries are smaller and older, have fewer resources and less dynamic material, but have a larger military book collection.

Navy CONUS

Participants indicated that they felt that military libraries have been replaced by internet cafes, good free civilian libraries, and other book stores in the community.

Navy OCONUS

Participants indicated that there were no differences between military and civilian libraries.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants indicated that although there are many similarities between military and civilian libraries, some differences are that military libraries provide free internet access, later operating hours, more programs for children, and less waiting in line for services.

Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants indicated that civilian libraries are more up to date and that military libraries have outdated material. However, military libraries carry warrior/professional development materials not available in civilian libraries.

Air Force CONUS

Some participants indicated that collections in military libraries are outdated and that it's easier to go to a bookstore, while others indicated that the military library always has what is needed and there is rarely a wait for materials.

Air Force OCONUS

Participants indicated that, compared to civilian libraries, military libraries have smaller collections and limited resources. However, military libraries provide movies for check-out, they don't charge late fees, they focus on military careers, and they provide materials relevant to their customers (e.g., CLEP and DANTES test preparation materials.)

Recommendations

Army CONUS

No specific recommendations were made concerning military libraries.

Army OCONUS

Participants recommended that the military should not provide libraries in CONUS because there are good libraries available off base.

Navy CONUS

Participants recommended having more computers and a separate gaming room. They indicated that it would be nice to have military libraries be comparable to civilian libraries, but if they are not as good as the civilian libraries, there is no reason to have them.

Navy OCONUS

No specific recommendations were made concerning military libraries.

Marine Corps CONUS

Participants recommended more activities for older children, more advertising for programs already offered, and teleconference capabilities.
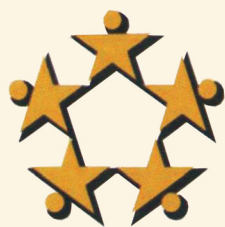
Marine Corps OCONUS

Participants recommended having more materials for middle-aged children (i.e., 12-18), having wireless hot-spots available, having a separate children's reading room, and that base commanders solicit input from the community when deciding what improvements should be made.

Air Force CONUS

Participants recommended that the library do a better job advertising current programs and services, that they work more with schools and daycares, and that all the services be centrally located on post (like a mall.)

Air Force OCONUS

Participants recommended having dedicated computers for school/research/work, having quiet zones for studying and reading, having a separate room for computers/internet, putting books online, and enforcing respect from children. Others recommended moving computers to an internet café and using the library only for books.