



The People of the Book: An Evaluation of the PJ Library Program

Executive Summary

PREPARED FOR:

PJ Library North America

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INTRODUCTION

This executive summary presents key findings from an evaluation of PJ Library conducted by Informing Change. A full evaluation report contains more detailed findings, analysis and recommendations.

THE PJ LIBRARY MODEL

PJ Library, an initiative of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, distributes free, age-appropriate, high quality Jewish children’s literature and music to families raising Jewish children. The primary purpose of this program is to encourage parents to share Jewish stories, traditions and values with their children, promote family conversations, and inspire families to engage in meaningful Jewish social, educational and communal experiences. The ultimate goal of PJ Library is to enhance Jewish identity, increase engagement in Jewish life and community and, over time, build a more vibrant North American Jewish community.

Launched in 2005, PJ Library has scaled rapidly. Today, more than 140,000 children, ages six months to eight years, receive PJ Library books each month. The program was designed to operate as a partnership between PJ Library North America (PJNA) and local partners, including Jewish Federations, Jewish Community Centers and synagogues. These community partners recruit subscribers and typically offer a variety of supplemental programs and activities. There are now more than 250 community partners in 43 U.S. states and 6 Canadian provinces.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

In late 2012, PJNA and key stakeholders participated in a theory of change development process, which clarified the purpose, key strategies, target constituencies and intended outcomes of the PJ Library program. This evaluation assesses the progress that PJ Library is making toward the intended outcomes articulated in its theory of change. The evaluation references and builds on a previous assessment of PJ Library conducted in 2010. This is the largest study of North American families raising Jewish children that the evaluators and PJ Library staff are aware of to date.

Because many factors have influenced the outcomes data in this report, the evaluation assesses PJ Library’s contribution to those results but does not determine the degree to which results are due solely to the efforts of PJ Library. The full report includes further information on data collection methods and evaluation strengths and limitations.

KEY DATA COLLECTION METHODS

- Subscriber Family Survey – 20,624 respondents (35% response rate across 99% of PJ Library communities)
- Community Partner Survey – 368 respondents (60% response rate across 84% of PJ Library communities)
- Key Informant Interviews – 24 hours of interviews with 5 PJNA staff members, 9 philanthropic supporters, 10 community partner executives and 5 thought leaders

FINDINGS

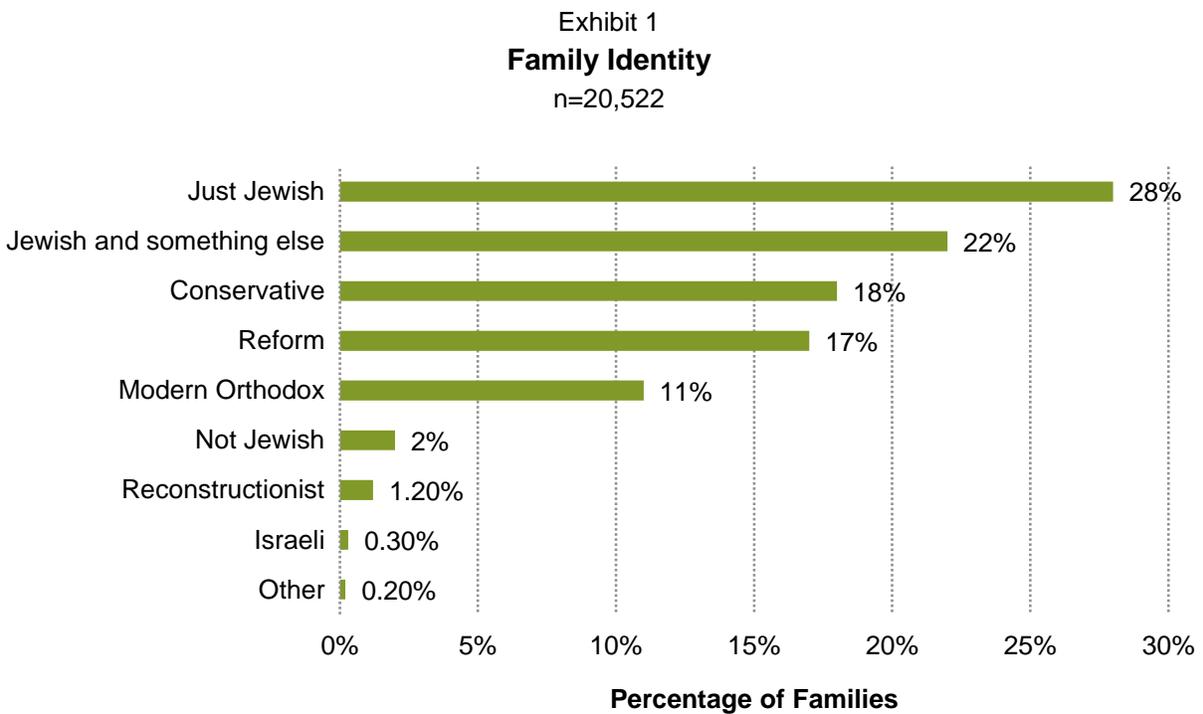
The evaluation findings focus on PJ Library’s two key constituent groups, subscriber families and community partners, as well as the growth trajectory of PJNA. **Overall, the evaluation findings indicate that PJ Library is effectively engaging families raising Jewish children and increasing the capacity and commitment of community partners to serve those families.**

PJ Library Subscriber Families

The evaluation examines three questions about subscriber families, focusing on their identity, their perceptions of the program and the program’s influence on them.

1. Who are the families receiving PJ Library books?

- **The majority of subscriber families have been part of PJ Library for three years or less** and receive one book per month for one child who is five years old or younger.
- **PJ Library serves families from across the spectrum of Jewish identity.** While 46% of subscriber families identify with one of the three major North American Jewish movements, 28% describe themselves as “Just Jewish.” (See Exhibit 1 below.)
- **One in five subscriber families identifies as interfaith** (“Jewish and something else”), suggesting that PJ Library is reaching a significant number of families in this key target demographic.



2. What do families think of PJ Library?

- **Subscriber families highly value the books they receive and they are overwhelmingly positive about their PJ Library experience.** In the subscriber family survey, 89% of respondents report that they enjoy the books and 93% say their children enjoy the books. Overall, 89% of families are “very satisfied” with their PJ Library experience.
- 73% of subscriber families also use the music CDs distributed by PJ Library and 56% of those families say the CDs are “highly valuable.”

“My son loves the books and loves to take them to school and share with his friends.”

–PJ Library Subscriber Family

3. How have families been influenced by subscribing to PJ Library?

The evaluation assesses PJ Library’s progress toward its three intended outcomes for subscriber families. It examines the program’s influence on families’ **awareness** of Jewish traditions, practices and values; their **attitudes** about being Jewish; and their **behaviors and practices** at home and in the community. **The findings suggest that PJ Library is making significant progress toward its intended outcomes for subscriber families.**

Awareness

- A majority of subscriber families report that PJ Library has increased their awareness of Jewish traditions, practices and values.
- 57% report that PJ Library has made their family more aware of Jewish holidays and lifecycle events.¹
- 56% say that PJ Library has made their family more aware of Jewish concepts and values than they were before.

Attitudes

- A majority of families report that their Jewish identity has deepened because of their PJ Library experience.
- 62% report that PJ Library has increased their family’s positive feelings about being Jewish.
- 61% say that PJ Library has helped their family feel more connected to its Jewish heritage.
- 59% say that PJ Library has made their family more *interested* in Jewish concepts and values than they were before.

PJ LIBRARY THEORY OF CHANGE

Intended outcomes for subscriber families

- More children and families engaging in conversation and learning Jewish traditions, values and customs
- Increased sense of Jewish identity among subscriber families
- More subscriber families making choices inspired by PJ Library

“Being an interfaith family, the books really help us add new traditions to our home life and help me learn more and more about Jewish holidays and practices.”

–PJ Library
Subscriber Family

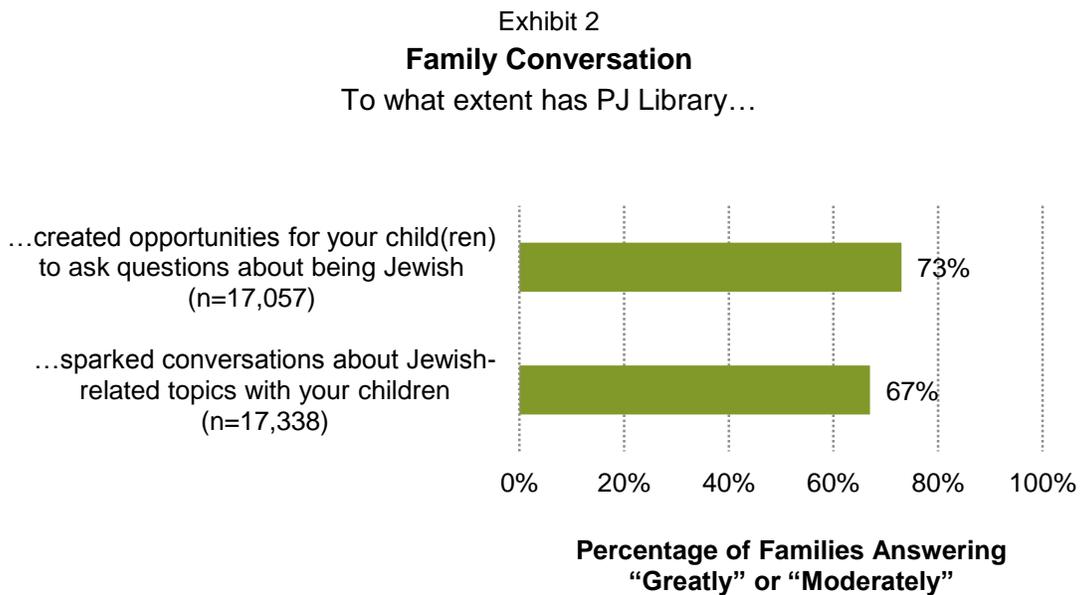
¹ Data in this section are derived from survey questions asking families, “To what extent has PJ Library....?” The figures quoted are the percentages of respondents who answered those questions by selecting “greatly” or “moderately.”

Behaviors/Practices

- PJ Library has also significantly influenced subscriber family behaviors and practices, both at home and in the community.

At home:

- 85% report that they discuss concepts or values from PJ Library books as a family.
- 75% say that they discuss Jewish-related concepts and values more than they used to because of the PJ Library books. (See Exhibit 2 below.)
- 58% say that PJ Library influenced their decision to build upon or add a Jewish tradition to their home life.



In the community:

- 80% of families report they have attended programs and events in their local community for families with young Jewish children, and 98% of those families agree or strongly agree that their children enjoy the programs.
- 32% of families say that PJ Library has influenced them to participate *more often* in Jewish-related programs and events in their community.²
- 36% say that PJ Library has helped them learn more about Jewish-related programs and events in their local community.
- Among families that have enrolled their children in a Jewish early childhood educational program since subscribing to PJ Library, 39% report that PJ Library influenced their decision.

² This data point, and the two that follow, reflect the percentages of respondents who answered survey questions by selecting "greatly" or "moderately."

PJ Library Community Partners

The evaluation also assesses PJ Library’s progress toward its three intended outcomes for community partners. **Overall, the findings suggest that PJ Library is making progress toward these intended outcomes.**

PJ LIBRARY THEORY OF CHANGE

Intended outcomes for community partners

- Increased capacity to support PJ Library subscriptions, to provide outreach to local families and to offer local programs
- Increased awareness of, and connection to, families raising Jewish children in their communities
- Increased sense of community among PJ Library program professionals

The analysis in this section is framed by four questions:

1. Who are the community partners, and what attracts them to PJ Library?

- Community partners are a highly diverse group. They have a variety of organizational structures; sources of local funding; levels of financial investment in the program; ages of children served; and quality/quantity of program staff.
- 98% of community partners report they are “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with PJ Library. Not one community partner respondent reported dissatisfaction with PJ Library.
- For community partners, the program’s most compelling elements include its simplicity and accessibility. Community partners also value the highly leveraged matching support from PJNA.

2. How has PJ Library influenced community partners’ efforts to identify and engage families raising Jewish children?

- 89% of community partners report that they are more focused on outreach to families raising young Jewish children since launching PJ Library. Of these, 84% cite PJ Library’s influence as either moderate or great.
- Since launching PJ Library, community partners report statistically significant improvements in their ability to identify and engage families raising Jewish children, including “hard-to-reach” families. (See Exhibits 3 and 4.)
- 84% of community partners report that they are committed or very committed to offering more family engagement programs.
- 74% of community partners report more planning of collaborative family engagement programming with other Jewish community organizations since launching PJ Library.

“Because of its reach, PJ has expanded the conversation. Communities have opened up. PJ has made communities more aware of and interested in engaging families with young children.”

– Community Partner
Staff Member

Exhibit 3

Community Partner Ability to Identify Families

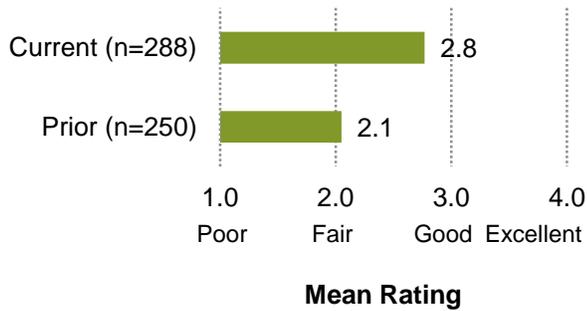
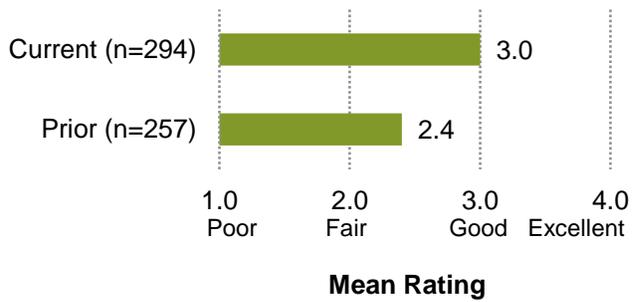


Exhibit 4

Community Partner Ability to Engage Families



3. What do community partners think about the supports provided by PJNA?

- 93% of community partner program professionals report feeling “moderately” to “extremely well” supported by their own organizations and by PJNA.
- A majority of community partners found each of the 11 support tools offered by PJNA useful.
- The PJ Library annual conference is the most highly valued support tool, but it is not utilized across all communities. Some respondents report that they would like, but are not able, to attend.
- Community partner executives encourage PJNA to provide additional supports, including regional events and networking opportunities, program design advice and marketing training.

4. How committed are community partners to PJ Library and what factors affect this commitment?

- 91% of community partner respondents are “committed” or “very committed” to maintaining their funding for PJ Library in the short term, and 81% in the long term. Additionally, 82% are “committed” or “very committed” to expanding the program to reach more local families.
- In response to the question, “What factors might affect your organization’s decision to continue as a PJ Library partner?,” 70% of respondents mention funding sustainability. Many community partners report that they are dependent on a single or small group of annual donors.

PJ Library North America

Finally, the evaluation assesses progress toward the intended outcomes for PJNA and the North American Jewish community. **The findings suggest that there has been significant progress toward these intended outcomes.**

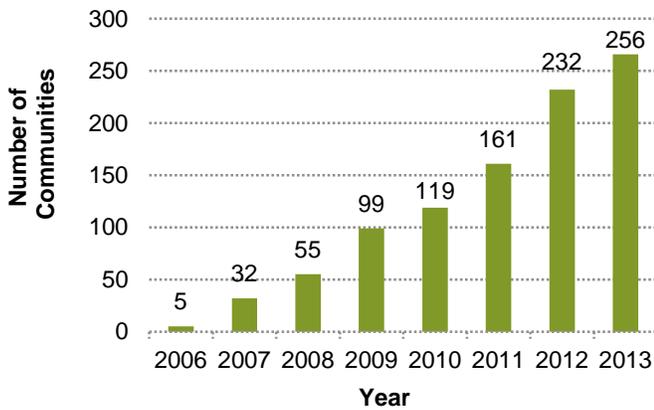
PJ LIBRARY THEORY OF CHANGE

Intended outcomes for PJ Library North America and the North American Jewish community

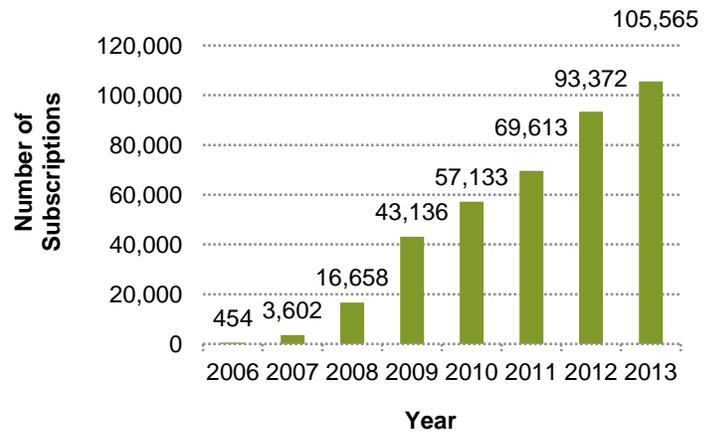
- Increased number of community partners
- Increased enrollment of subscriber families
- Increased access to PJ Library for all families raising Jewish children

Since 2010, the number of PJ Library community partners has grown by 124% and total subscriptions have grown by 85%.

**Exhibit 5
Community Partner Growth over Time**



**Exhibit 6
Subscription Growth over Time**



A majority of philanthropic supporters express their continuing commitment to PJ Library and praise PJNA as attentive and responsive to their concerns. Some note the occasional differences between the goals and strategies of PJNA, community partners and philanthropic supporters, and they suggest PJNA continue its efforts to address these differences.



Starting with a simple and ingenious idea, PJ Library has grown into a movement that touches families across North America. The findings in this evaluation support PJ Library’s basic premise: Jewish books sent to children’s homes have the power to launch journeys of Jewish learning and self-discovery. PJ Library’s community partners are eager to help families make deeper Jewish connections and this evaluation suggests that they have been inspired by PJ Library to invest more deeply in those efforts. As with any great idea, the details of implementation are complicated: families are diverse, communities are different, values and priorities vary, and there are many destinations “beyond the books.” This evaluation is designed to inform the leadership of PJ Library as it considers these issues and plans for the program’s future.



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