

# **Maryland Library Associates Training Institute (LATI)**

Nancy Bolt and Jody Howard

In 2008, the Maryland Division of Library Development and Services (DLDS) commissioned a study of the Maryland Library Associates Training Institute (LATI) for library support staff. DLDS contracted with Nancy Bolt of Nancy Bolt & Associates and Jody Howard of CISFLO to conduct the study.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Methodology**

The LATI evaluation was conducted using a combination of personal interviews, an online survey, 13 Focus Groups, observation of LATI sessions, and review of written documents about LATI. An online survey was distributed with approximately 225 LATI participants and 114 managers and supervisors of library associates responding. The consultants conducted Focus Groups with LATI participants, their supervisors/managers, DLDS staff, the LATI Advisory Committee, and library directors.

The recommendations in this report evolved from the information gathered from all the sources indicated. The recommendations are solely the responsibility of the consultants; however, they reflect the information that was gathered.

### **Survey Results**

The online survey results summarize responses by 225 LATI past participants and 114 supervisor/managers.

When asked to identify the three major benefits of LATI training to LATI participants, library users, and the library system, LATI participants and managers showed a great deal of commonality. They agreed that LATI participants had increased their:

- Knowledge of print and online resources.
- Understanding of library service in general.
- Confidence in serving the public.
- Use of reference behaviors.
- Knowledge of statewide library resources.

When asked about the support that is available to LATI participants, however, there were stark differences. With the exception of the response “time off to attend sessions,” managers indicated the library supported LATI participants in greater percentages than did the participants themselves.

When asked how satisfied they were with LATI, the majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the LATI program. Only 21% of LATI participants and 16% of managers/supervisors expressed a level of dissatisfaction. Many of the comments on the

survey and in the Focus Groups discussed possible areas of improvement to make LATI stronger.

## **Focus Group Results**

Below is a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of LATI as identified by the Focus Groups. Each of these items is discussed in greater detail later in this report.

### ***Strengths of LATI***

Listed below are the strengths of LATI identified in the Focus Groups. Five strengths were mentioned by either 12 or 13 Focus Groups. All mentioned strengths had aspects that were identified as weaknesses, and corresponding suggestions for improvement:

- The mix of face-to-face and online coursework.
- Networking and learning how other systems work.
- The tour of the Enoch Pratt Free Library and its SLRC services.
- Showcase Project.
- Reference sources/behaviors.

### ***Weaknesses of LATI***

Five aspects of LATI were listed as weaknesses by a majority of the Focus Groups. Each of these is explored in greater depth later in the report. They are:

- The combination of emails, blogs, and the intranet as a way of communicating with the LATI participants and their managers/supervisors.
- Too little accountability.
- Lack of timely feedback on assignments.
- Lack of enough face-to-face sessions.
- Showcase Project structure.

## **Overall Value of LATI**

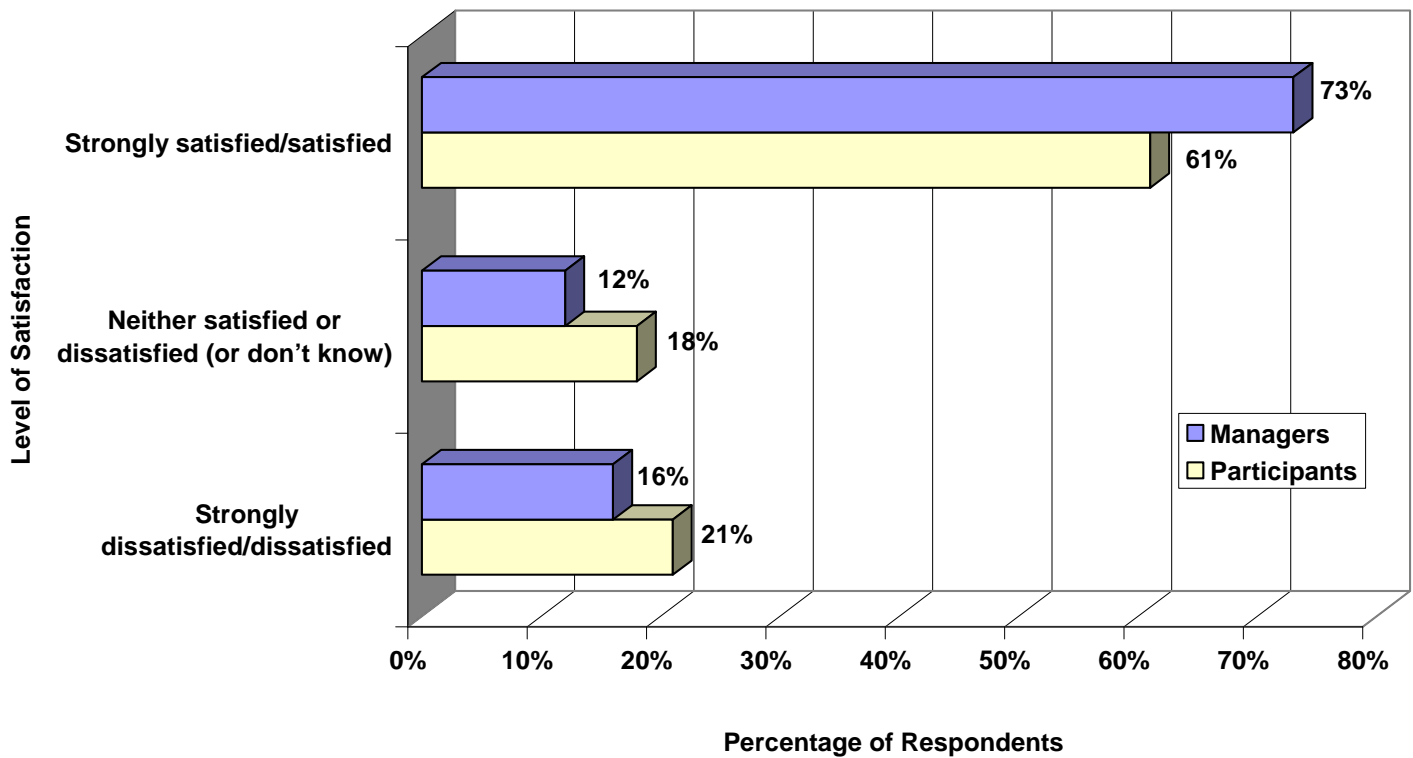
The Focus Groups, the survey results, comments on the survey questions, and individual interviews confirm that Maryland librarians and library associates feel the LATI program is of value and benefit to the residents and libraries of Maryland. Few were in favor of eliminating the program; when they did, this was usually because they felt they had received excellent training from their local library. Some were high in its praise. One supervisor/manager wrote as a survey response, *“This is a wonderful training experience for novices in the library field and a valuable refresher for re-entry to others. I know it has been invaluable in helping me develop capable and mature workers who enrich the library throughout their lives as both library employees and library customers.”*

## **Survey Results**

Below are the results of the survey showing the benefits of the LATI program to participants, libraries, and library uses.

## Overall Satisfaction

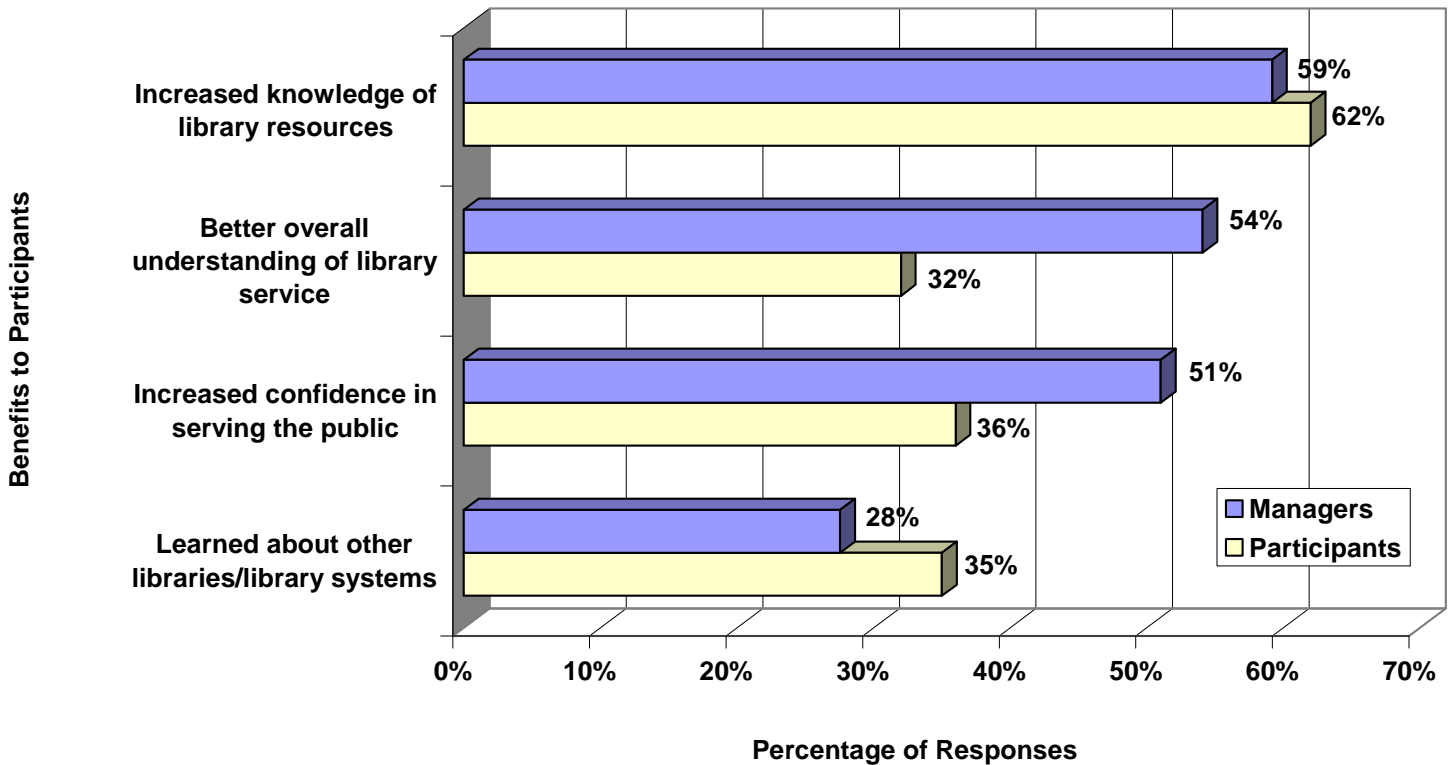
**Overall Satisfaction with LATI  
by Respondent Type**



- Although the majority of both participants (61%) and managers (73%) were satisfied with LATI, a significantly smaller percentage of participants indicated satisfaction.
- Participants were more likely to indicate they were either not satisfied (21%) or unwilling to commit to a level of satisfaction (18%) than were managers (16% dissatisfied and 12% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).
- More than one in five participants (21%) and nearly one in six managers (16%) expressed dissatisfaction with LATI.

## Benefits to Staff

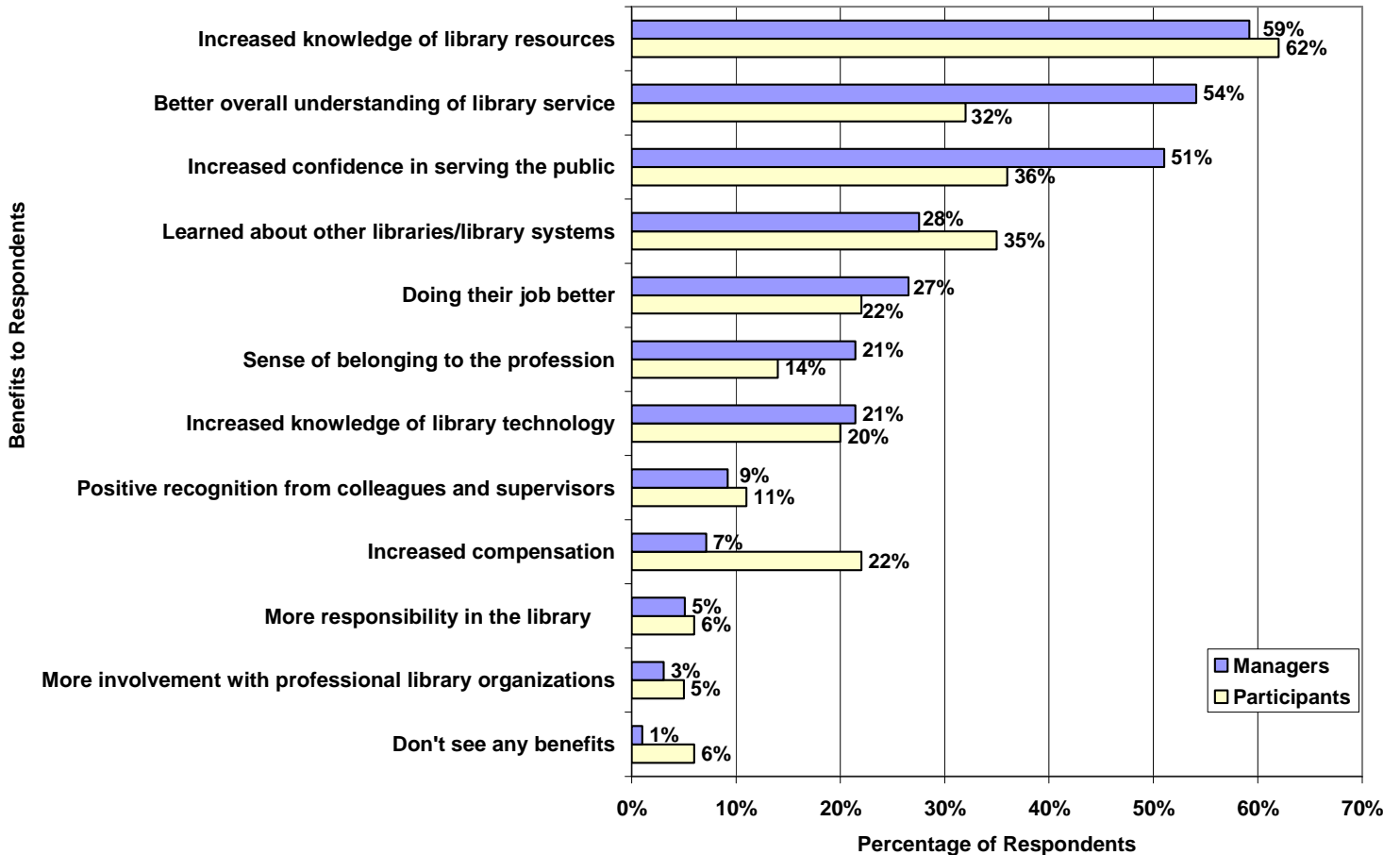
**Selected Benefits of LATI to Participants  
by Respondent Type**



### Selected Responses:

- The top four benefits were common to both managers and LATI participants, although not in the same order or percentage. An increased knowledge of library resources was the benefit cited most frequently by both groups.
- Managers indicated a gain in overall understanding of library service (54%) and an increase confidence in serving the public (51%) as benefits to LATI participants far more frequently than the actual participants did.
- Participants (35%) said “learned about other libraries” was a benefit of LATI participation more frequently than managers (28%).
- More than half of managers selected the group’s top three benefits to LATI participants—almost twice as often as they chose any other benefit.

### Benefits of LATI to Participants by Respondent Type

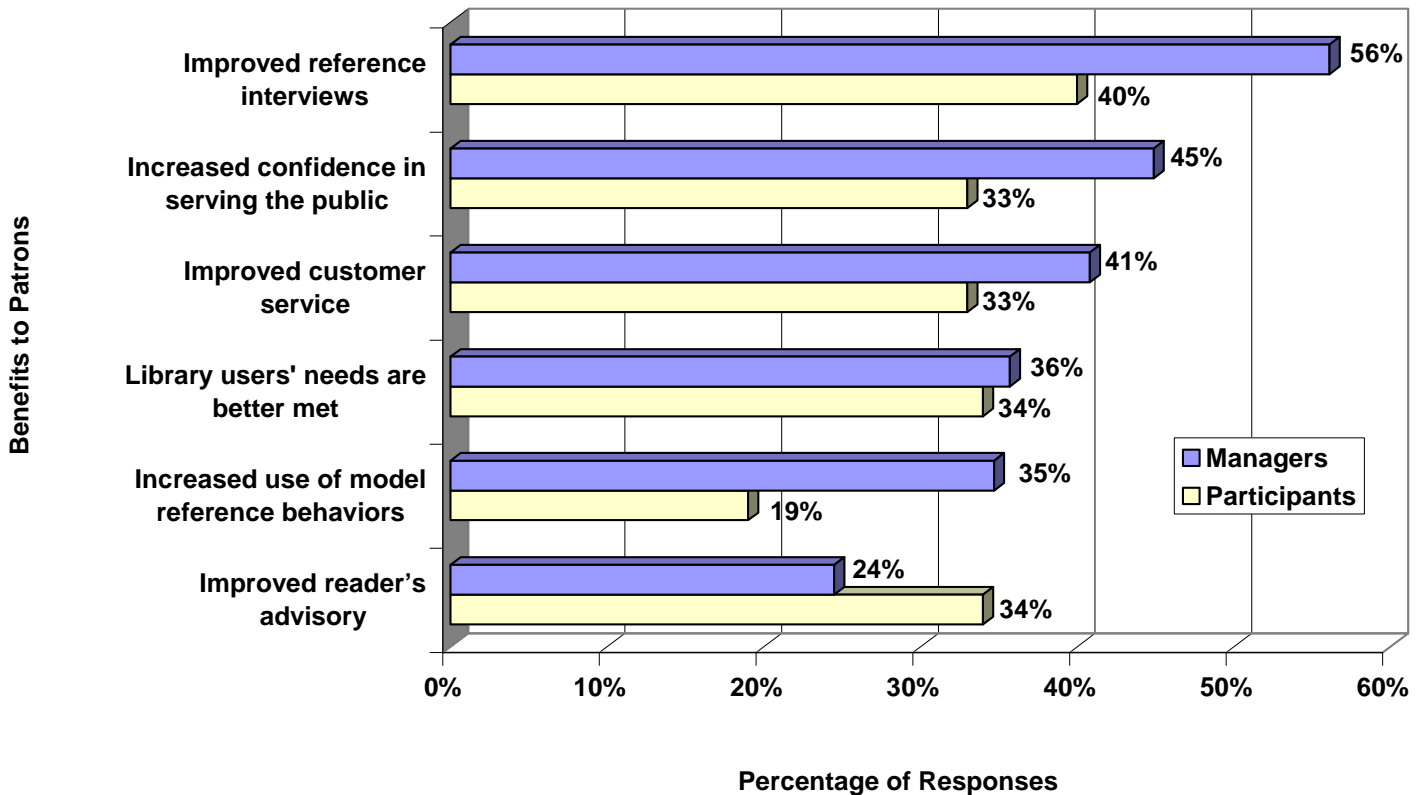


All responses:

- Clearly, an increase in compensation is more important to participants than their managers with over one in five LATI participants choosing it. Put another way, managers and participants ranked most benefits in similar order, except for increased compensation. Tied with “doing their job better,” participants ranked “increased compensation” fifth with 22% responding that this was a benefit, whereas managers ranked it ninth with 7%.
- Although a small percentage of respondents, more participants (6%) than managers (1%) found no benefit in the LATI program.

## Benefits to Library Patrons

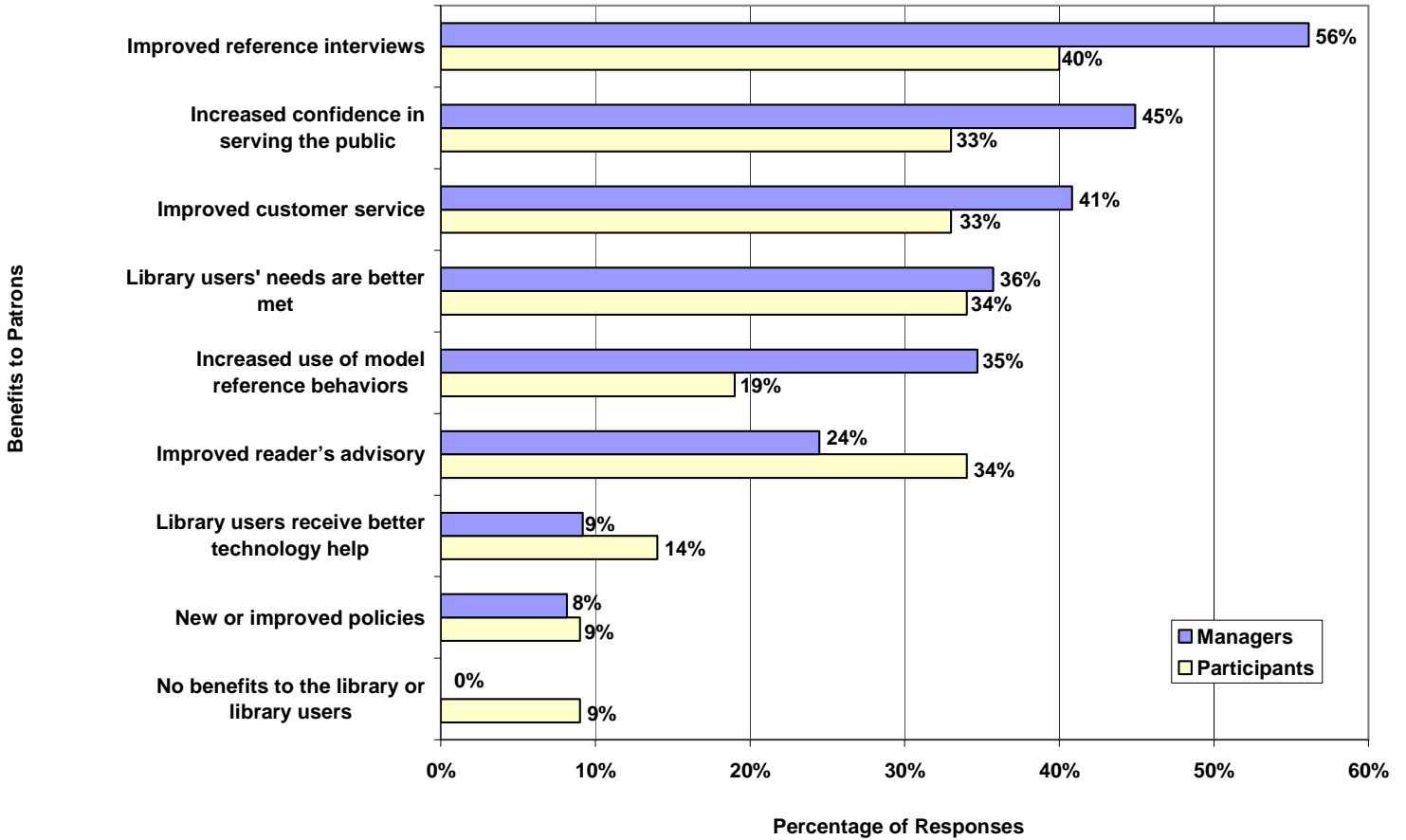
Selected Benefits of LATI to Library Patrons  
by Respondent Type



### Selected Responses:

- Managers found benefits to patrons of the LATI program in greater percentages than did participants, including an improvement in reference interviews, the benefit indicated most frequently by both groups (56% versus 40% respectively).
- Of the six most frequently chosen responses, "improved reader's advisory" is the only benefit to library users that LATI participants (34%) indicated more frequently than managers (24%).

### Benefits of LATI to Library Patrons by Respondent Type

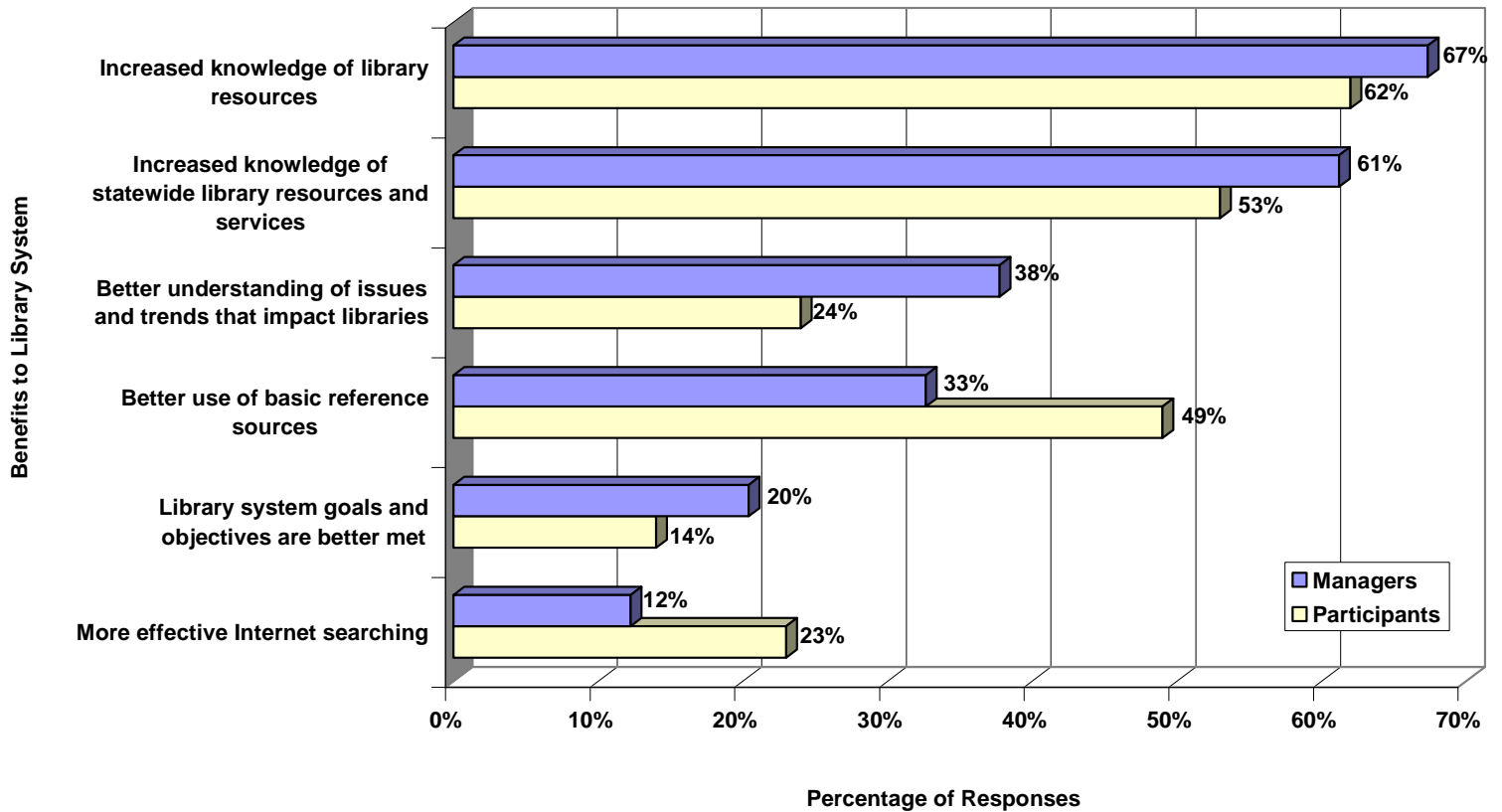


All responses:

- Managers and supervisors generally found LATI more beneficial to library patrons than did participants. In fact, none of the responding managers indicated there were “no benefits to the library or library users.”
- However, nearly one in ten participants (9%) in LATI said library users realized no benefits from the program.

## Benefits to the Library

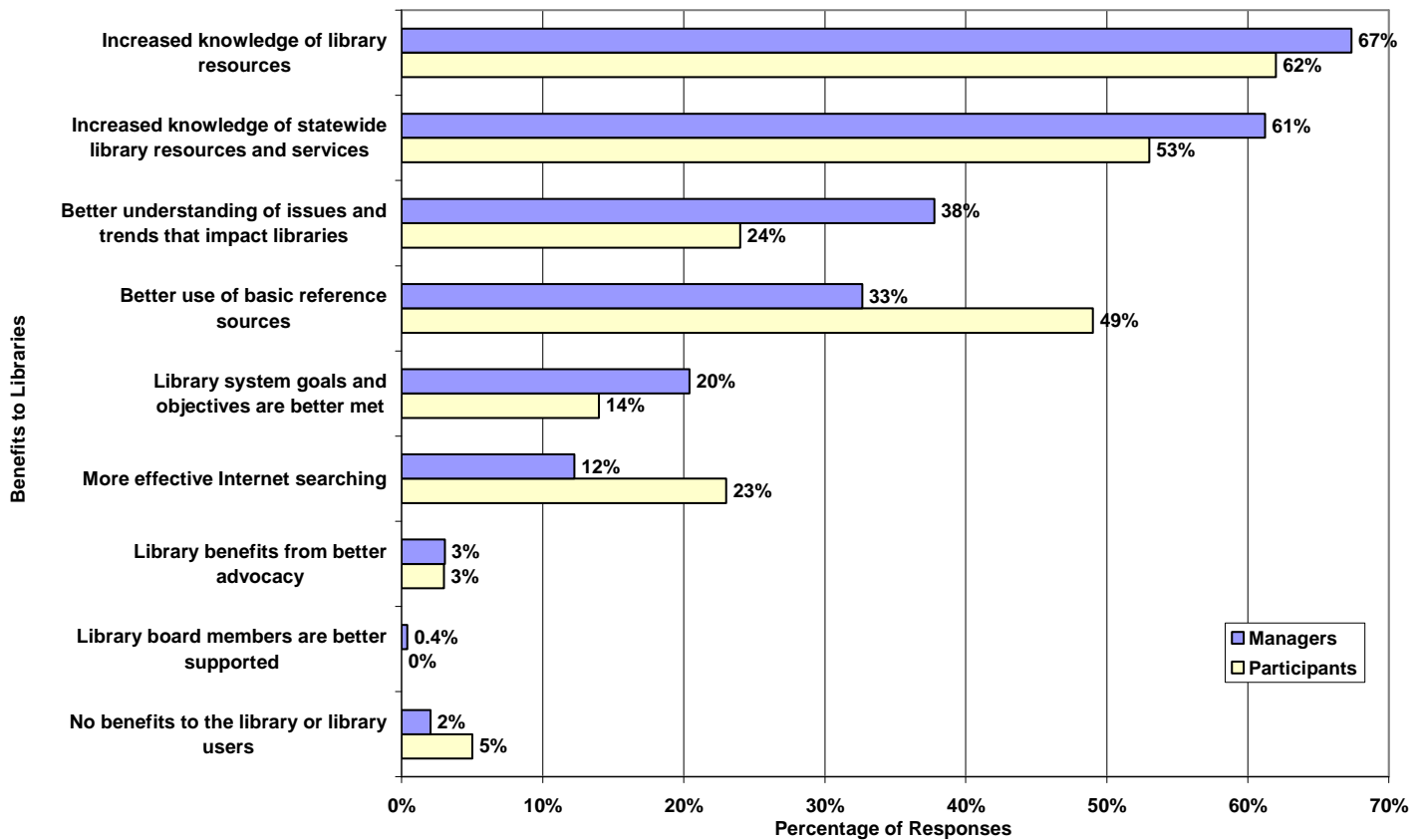
**Selected Benefits of LATI to the Library System  
By Respondent Type**



### Selected Responses:

- In general, managers indicated benefits to the library system in greater percentages than did LATI participants.
- However, participants indicated a better use of reference resources (49%) and more effective Internet searching (23%) significantly more often than managers (33% and 12% respectively).
- The top two responses for managers—increased knowledge of both library resources (67%) and statewide resources (61%)—were indicated almost twice as often as any other benefits cited by the group.

### Benefits of LATI to the Library System by Respondent Type

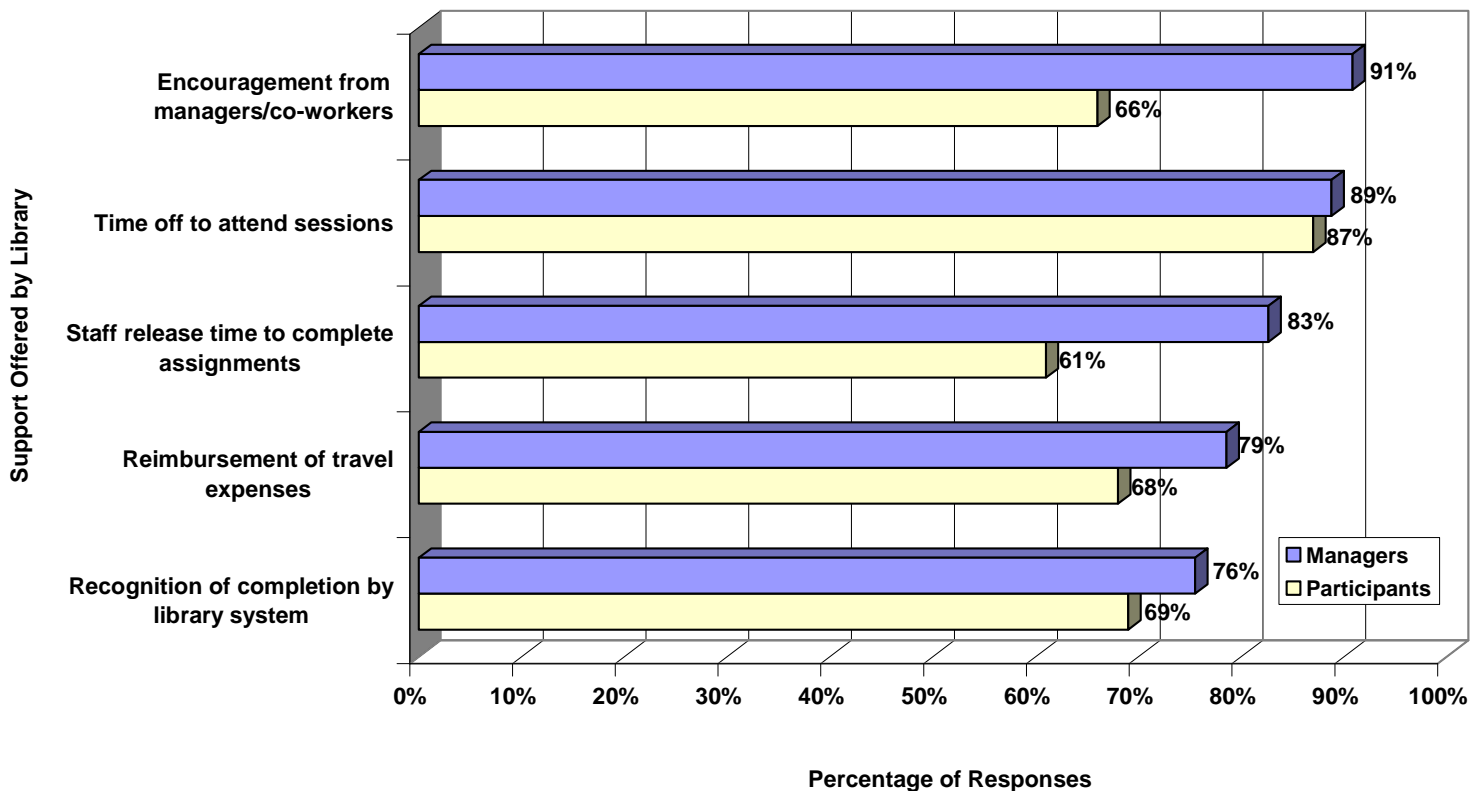


All responses:

- Perhaps not surprisingly, benefits to the library directly related to everyday, frontline activities were indicated far more frequently than managerial or leadership activities. For example, “better advocacy,” “better support for the library board,” and “library system goals and objectives are better met” were chosen far less by both groups than other benefits.
- Very few managers (2%) or participants (5%) indicated that LATI held no benefits to library.

## Library Support for LATI Participants

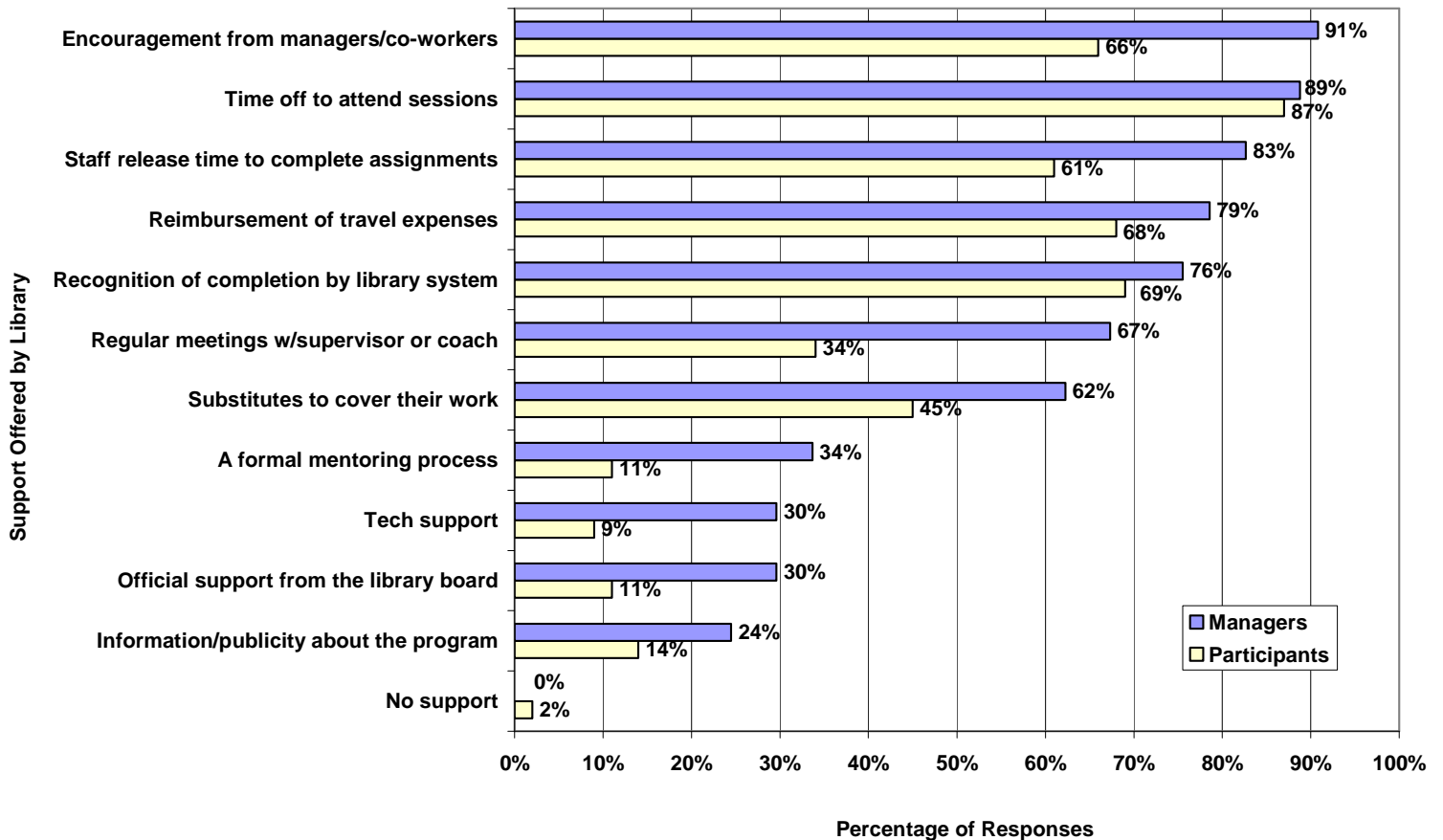
**Selected Responses**  
**Support Offered by Library Systems to LATI Participants**  
**by Respondent Type**



### Selected Responses:

- With the exception of the response “time off to attend sessions,” managers indicated the library supported LATI participants in greater percentages than did the participants themselves.
- Apparently LATI participants (66%) are feeling far less encouragement from their managers and co-workers than their managers (91%) feel they are getting.

**Support Offered by Library Systems to LATI Participants  
by Respondent Type**



All responses:

- None of the responding managers and only 2 percent of participants said there was no support for LATI at their library.
- Managers indicated that their library supported staff attending LATI in far greater percentages than the participants, with the exception of the response “time off to attend sessions” which was nearly equal for both groups. The discrepancy between the two groups’ perceptions suggests that there is room for improvement in delivery and/or communication about the libraries’ support of LATI participants.

**Support Offered by Library Systems to LATI Participants  
by Respondent Type**

