

The survey

I conducted a survey in November 2016 on the level of charging for various small scale activities such as charging for drinks and craft activities. I was not aware of any similar survey and this area interested me, both in terms of what extra income can be made but also about the current level of commercialisation in public libraries.

The survey was conducted for free by SurveyMonkey and so was limited to a total of 100 responses, which was very easily achieved. More than 100 responses were made but I cannot access those without paying. Links to the survey were put on LIS-PUB-LIBS, Twitter and on Public Libraries News posts. Responses were entirely anonymous thus the nature of respondents can only be guessed from the nature of the comments.

Results

The full results, and the text of every comment, are included in the pages below. My conclusions drawn from the data are:

Pricing of hot drinks

- Over half of respondents offer hot drinks for free, without asking for a donation.
- The other half either charge or offer a donation and report no ill effects by doing so.

Pricing of wine

- There is a lack of awareness amongst some respondents about the legal position of providing wine. Some believe that provision of alcohol does not need a license if included in the ticket price. Still others believe that asking for donations is a way to avoid paying for a license. In fact, one needs to apply for a license if any kind of charge is made, direct or indirect.
- License cost of £21 is seen as a barrier, suggesting a combination of small numbers attending and low charges being made.
- Providing alcohol is barred by some councils due to concerns over health or driving.

Pricing of unstaffed and staffed crafts

- The vast majority of respondents do not ask for donations for unstaffed crafts in any way. Less than one in ten ask for donations and barely any place even a nominal charge. There is a concern that asking for donations will deter usage and there are also some concerns, expressed on my Twitter feed, about deterring some who do not have the ability to pay.
- The big majority do not charge for staffed craft activities. However, of those that do, no-one reports losing usage by charging, probably due to the small amounts concerned (around £1).

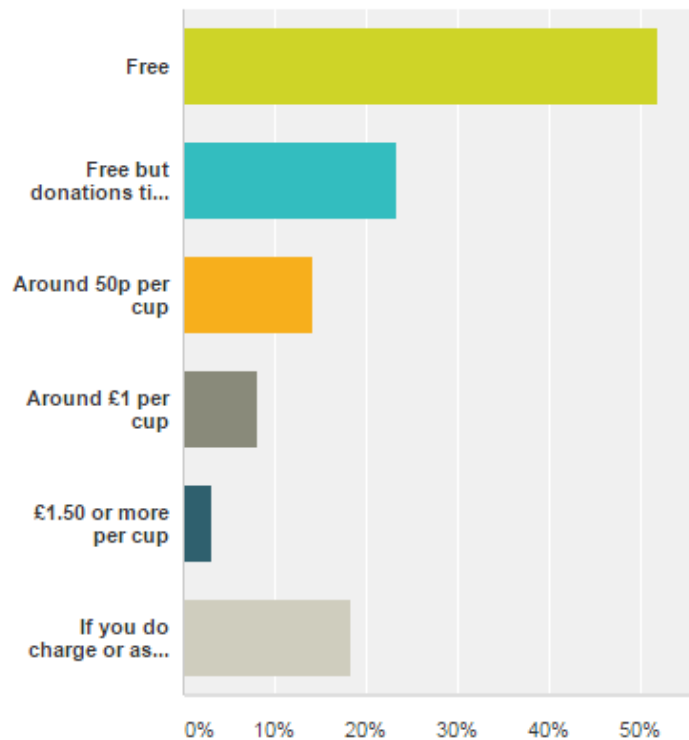
Contact

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www.publiclibrariesnews.com

Q1. If you supply coffee or tea as an extra if you have an event, how much do you charge?

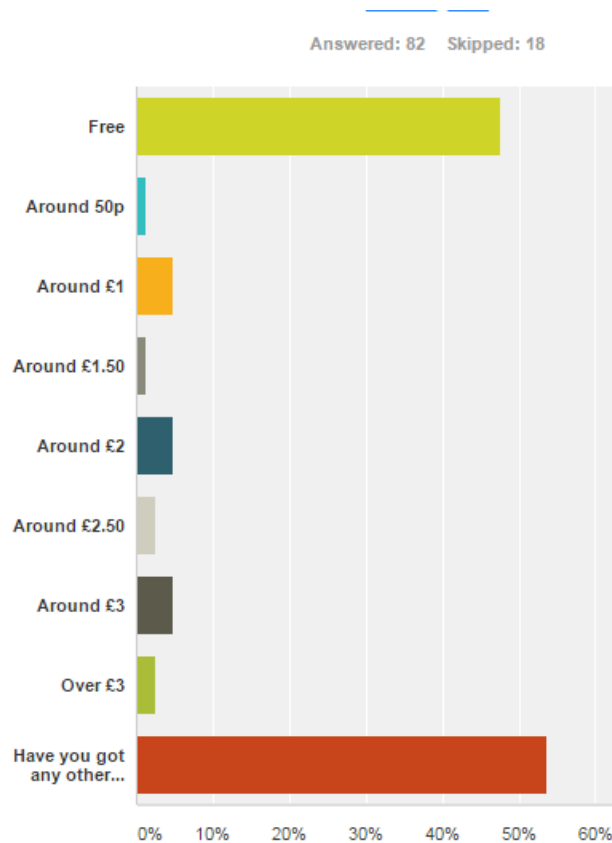
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If you do charge or ask for donations, has there been an impact on usage since you started doing this?

- “Policies vary between libraries. if any event advertises refreshments then they are free, however if refreshments are offered on top, then one library charges 50p a cup.”
- “Most seem to take it up. 50p seems considered pretty nominal.”
- “One off events like author talks or local history morning free but weekly groups such as Knit and Natter 10p a cup which they are happy to pay”
- “We also have a drinks machine in the Library which charges £1 a cup for a range of drinks. We take donations at our frequent coffee mornings, for the Friends of the Library, which funnels the money back to the library by paying for use of facilities etc”
- “We've always done it - we work on a pay as you like basis for all events and drinks etc. That includes everyone as nobody has to pay and some pay over what it's worth”
- “No impact - most people happy to donate and no-one made to feel bad because they can't”

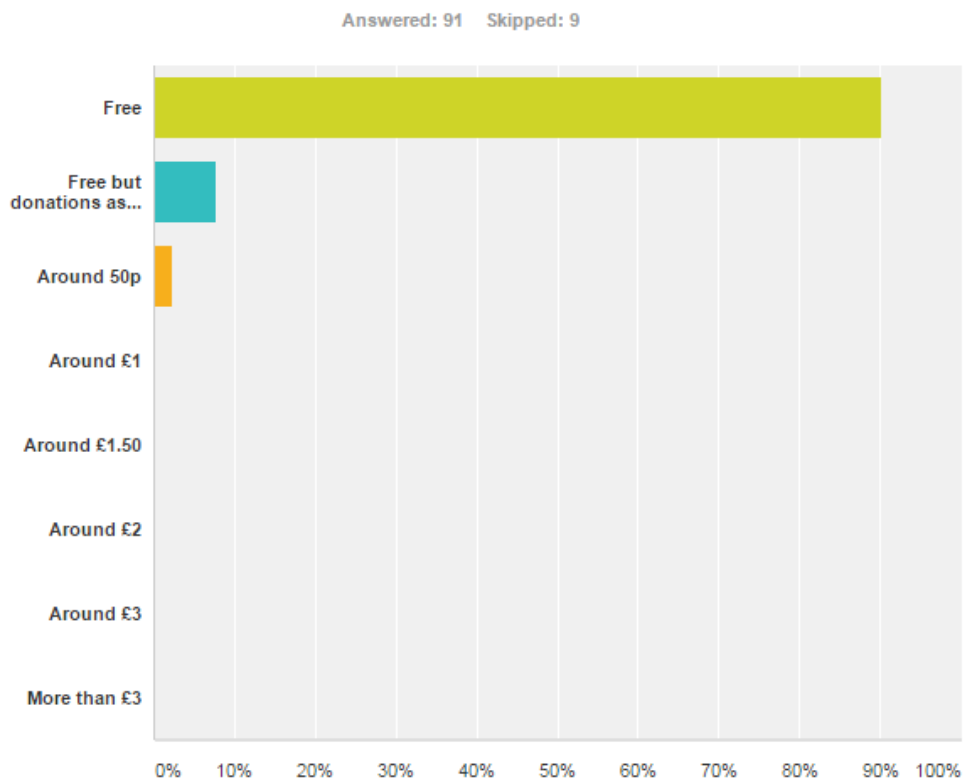
Q2. If you supply a glass of wine as an extra if you have an event, how much do you charge?



- “We are not allowed to charge or alcohol without a license so we have stopped doing so”
- “21 day license application ahead of event needs to be more widely known. Also it's nice to offer a glass of wine free at events that are paid for, nice bonus and surprise for customers.”
- “Dont usually supply wine, only at our annual event for reading group members where they pay for the whole day at £10”
- “Usually include in ticket price if we're charging for the event (non-alcoholic options available of course) but if doing so, or if charging for the drink itself, need to factor in £21 for license. So if an unknown / local author, often don't charge, so can serve a glass of wine as hospitality without the need for a license.”
- “Tend to either put the price of the wine into the event costing, or run a bar”
- “Included in ticket price”
- “We do not provide alcohol at events this save money on having a license”
- “We do not do this and haven't for some time due to council objectives around health”
- “We no longer provide alcohol at events due to being in the transport department of the CC. There have been a few comments but not a huge response from customers. We were getting our wine for events for free from Barefoot wines - they don't advertise so spend their marketing budget on giving away free wine at community events - a brilliant find.”

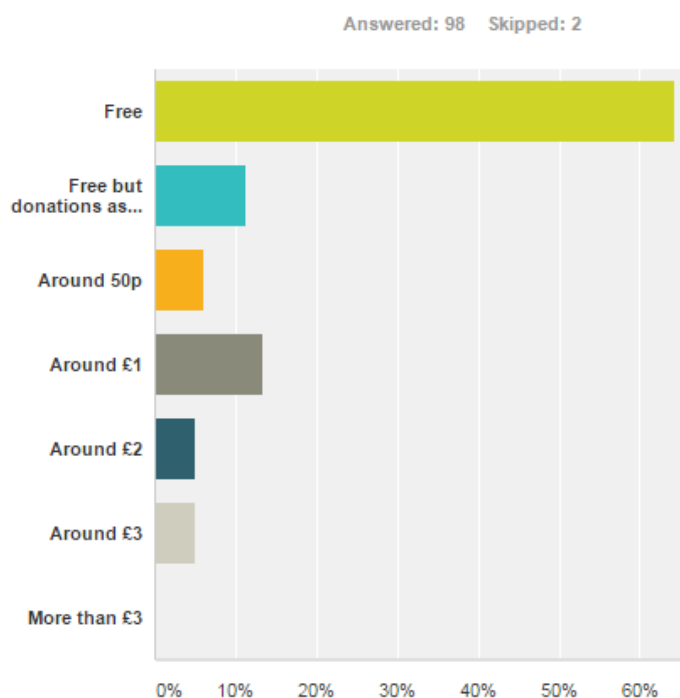
- “Events focused on children and families, do not usually involve alcohol”
- “you can only provide wine if the event is free unless you have a licence so we do not provide wine any more because we cannot justify the licence fee and can't afford the wine without charging”
- “Customers are always chuffed but we can only serve wine at launches etc if there is sponsorship/funding available.”
- “We have never done this, and would have to charge, I think”
- ”Offered with the ticket price in the event”
- “Technically, we would include the cost of the wine with the ticket price. Say a £5 ticket for an evening event would include the cost of a glass of wine”
- “We only offer wine at events occasionally”
- “We do not provide alcohol, but if we were to do so we would not be able to charge as this would involve licensing”
- “Free but donations tin on display”
- “We don't hold many evening events but wouldn't serve wine because we don't like to charge for events”
- “Have donation boxes available”
- “Free but usually only at events we charge for (e.g book quiz is £5 for a team of 5 and the wine is help yourself. We make no money).”
- “Wine is only served at high profile launch events and these are very few and far between. When served no charge is applied”
- “We have a donations tin with a suggested donation of £2”
- “We do this by ticketing not actually charging for the wine. This negates any licencing worries.”
- “We've stopped doing this as it is costly in terms of staff to serve etc as well as cost of alcohol “

Q3. What do you charge for unstaffed crafts activities (e.g. simple crafts that you can leave on a table for the public to use any time)?



- “Don't offer crafts , just colouring in sheets, or paper that is being recycled, plus wax crayons.”
- “We do have a small donations box on library counters that we also use for events”
- “I think there would be an impact particularly for children's activites. Libraries should be inclusive”
- “We don't do unstaffed craft activities except colouring sheets”
- “Still free but very basic”
- “I run a Friends group but it's very difficult to raise interest and attendance - even at free events”

Q4. What do you charge for staffed craft activities (e.g. crafts where you would need a member of staff at the table to help)?



- “We are a voluntary library and before we established our interest groups, we did a local survey on people's view of appropriate charges for craft meetings etc. The average was (to my surprise) £2.00. The maximum was £5.00 for film shows. We have managed to survive by charging £2.00 per person per session and there has been no resistance to that amount.”
- “Craft activities done by Library staff £1 Craft activities led by artists £3”
- “Three answers as we are generally free but we try to keep the prices as low as we can. 50p and £1 are the least frequent! But we are almost always "sold out" whether we charge or not. Where a cost is incurred, the Friends of the Library will pick up the tab.”
- “Pay as you like again. This is for a volunteer-run library.”
- “We charge £3-5 for Christmas party, when we give out a book as a present and offer some fruit, crackers and drinks. They are very popular so we need have bookings.”
- “Money goes back into crafts - most people happy to pay for this, understand that we have budgetary constraints now”
- “This for children's activities. We charge more c£5 for adult sessions but would not be staff facilitating”
- “I run a Friends group but total apathy reigns and it's difficult to get anyone to come along even if free”