

Texas Public Libraries

Economic Benefits and Return on Investment



TEXAS PUBLIC LIBRARIES OFFER
\$1.652 BILLION
IN SERVICES INCLUDING



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS



BOOKS AND DIGITAL MEDIA



RESEARCH DATABASES

AND
MORE!

TEXAS PUBLIC



LIBRARIES

\$967 MILLION

IN ECONOMIC
ACTIVITY

**& 11,000
JOBS**

Texas State Library and Archives Commission

This report was prepared by the

Bureau of Business Research IC² Institute

The University of Texas at Austin

January 2017

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Chapter I. Introduction: Scope, Methodology, Limitations	5
Project Goals	5
Methodology	5
Report Overview and Organization	6
Chapter II. Key Financial Data of Texas Public Libraries	7
Library Data	7
Statewide Economic Impacts from Library Expenditures	9
Definitions	10
Chapter III. Market Values of Library Services	11
Introduction	11
Reference Services	11
Programs	14
Volunteers	16
In-Library Use of Materials	18
Computer Terminals and Internet Access	20
Wireless Internet Access	23
Electronic Databases	25
Circulation of Materials	27
Chapter IV. Summary of Quantifiable Economic Impacts	30
Appendices	33
Appendix A: Summaries of Recent Impact Studies	34
State of Minnesota	35
Santa Clara County, California	38
City of Toronto, Ontario	40
Salt Lake County, Utah	43
Toledo Lucas County, Ohio	45
Appendix B: Bibliography and References	47
Appendix C: Performing Organization and Project Staff	48
Tables	
Table 2.1. Statewide Economic Impact Of Library Expenditures, Fy2015	10
Table 3.1. Statewide Value Of Library Programs In Fy2015	15
Table 3.2. Potential Values Of Volunteer Hours In Fy2015	17
Table 3.3. Potential Values Of Books, Based On Other Sources	27
Table 3.4. Derived Values Of Books, Based On Other Sources	28
Table 4.1. Statewide Values Of Public Library Services, Fy2015	30
Table 4.2. Return On Investment In Recent Reports	31
Table 4.3. Return On Investment In Selected Early Reports	31

Acknowledgments

The research team wishes to thank the Texas State Library and Archives Commission for their support and cooperation in completing the project. Gloria Meraz, Assistant State Librarian, provided guidance and assistance. Stacey Malek, Program Coordinator, fielded many information requests and always responded promptly and thoroughly.

Executive Summary

Public libraries in the State of Texas provide significant economic benefits for their communities. Collectively, in FY2015, Texas public libraries were found to provide \$2.628 billion in benefits while costing \$566 million, a return on investment of \$4.64 for each dollar.

A data-intensive research design was developed to document and to quantify these economic benefits. Extensive databases from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) were used in conjunction with the input-out economic modeling software, IMPLAN. Based on the IMPLAN model, which analyzed public libraries purely as business and organizational entities, libraries produced \$976 million in economic activity. Further, in FY2015, more than 11,000 jobs in Texas were dependent on public library expenditures.

Another major component of the quantitative analysis examined services offered by most public libraries in Texas. Economic estimates were derived for those services as well as for wireless internet usage and volunteers at public libraries:

- Reference services;
- Educational programs;
- Volunteers
- In-library use of books, serials, and periodicals;
- Computer terminals and internet access;
- Wireless internet access;
- Electronic databases; and
- Circulation of books and digital media.

A conservative approach was utilized that provides much greater certainty that the estimated services values are minimums. The total value of these public library services was estimated conservatively at \$1.652 billion. The Texas ROI of 4.64 compares favorably to results in prior studies of other states and cities, given the conservative approaches used in this analysis.

This report updates portions of an analysis performed in late 2012 for FY2011. Compared to that analysis, the value of the same services has increased by 7.8%, and the value of all public library services increased by 21.2%, primarily due to two new services being included. The ROI increased from 4.42 to 4.64, or approximately 5 percent.

Chapter I. Introduction: Scope, Methodology, Limitations

Project Goals

Libraries are collections of books and periodicals, sources of access to digital repositories, entry points to municipal, state, and federal government programs, and destination points for children and adults. They can assist in rejuvenating neighborhoods and preventing population loss in rural communities. Public libraries also have economic impacts, both short- and long-term. This study examined the economic benefits, economic impacts, and contributions to economic growth by public libraries in the State of Texas in FY2015. Both quantitative and qualitative, difficult-to-measure economic benefits were included.

Methodology

To determine the economic impacts of public libraries in Texas, a data-intensive research design was developed. Databases from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission served as the primary basis for the quantitative estimates of economic benefits.¹ TSLAC data was used in conjunction with the input-output economic modeling software, IMPLAN. IMPLAN is commonly used by economists and is widely accepted as one of three software modeling programs for impact analyses (the others are REMI and RIMS II). The IMPLAN software, as well as the accompanying multipliers, social accounting matrices, and trade flows, allow for economic analysis of public libraries as well as other related service industries. The software used in this report is unique to the economic activity in the State of Texas.² Identified expenditures and jobs from public libraries, obtained from the TSLAC databases, served as the primary inputs to IMPLAN.

Another major component of the quantitative analysis examined major services offered by most public libraries in Texas: circulation of books and other media; computers and internet; educational programs; electronic databases; and reference services. This analysis required combining statewide totals for each of the services from the TSLAC database, with values for each service, e.g. each educational program, a reference inquiry, or a book checked out. Prior studies of libraries in other

1 The annual survey of public libraries by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission is conducted and checked by experienced staff. Other data sources, and any cautions, are noted in the respective service function.

2 IMPLAN utilizes a 500+ industry matrix, allowing for detailed industry analysis. For this report, such detail was unnecessary and results were described in terms of direct, indirect, and induced impacts on output, employment, and wages. More details, including a table of definitions, are provided in Chapter II of this report.

jurisdictions were reviewed as part of the valuation process. Economic estimates also were generated for the benefits from volunteers working at public libraries, in-library use of books, serials, and periodicals, and wireless internet access.

As part of the overall methodology, the research team conducted a review of recent return-on-investment studies of public libraries. This review documented the range of methodologies used previously, showed variation in library services' values, and provided a context for the quantitative results from the IMPLAN modeling and the overall ROI figure in Texas. Summaries of each recent study appear in Appendix A.

Throughout this report, a conservative approach has been utilized in valuing library services. For some services, we have adapted approaches previously used in other studies, although not necessarily the valuations of the services. Often there is room for judgment about valuation, and when that has occurred, we have chosen the lower figures because of the uncertainty within the estimation process. By using the lower, more conservative values, this analysis is able to report with certainty that public libraries in Texas provide a minimum aggregate value to their patrons and communities. Any errors in the estimates are much more likely to be understatements, rather than overstatements.

Report Overview and Organization

Chapter II provides key financial characteristics of Texas public libraries and then documents the direct and indirect economic and employment impacts statewide of public library expenditures.

Chapter III details major library services, offers alternative approaches to valuation of these services, and estimates statewide values for each.

Chapter IV summarizes the economic impacts from library expenditures and services and then compares the return-on-investment to those in recent impact studies and then to earlier reports.

Three appendices appear after the main report:

- Summaries of Four Recent Library Impact Studies
- References and Citations
- Performing Organization and Project Staff

Chapter II. Key Financial Data of Texas Public Libraries

This chapter describes key characteristics of Texas' approximately 550 public libraries. In a later section of this chapter, data and information are presented that assesses the economic contributions of library spending on the State of Texas based on expenditures and employment in fiscal year 2015.

Library Data

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission provided operating and capital expenditure data for public libraries across Texas in their Annual Reports for Local Fiscal Year 2015. Economic impacts were estimated by examining operating expenditures, capital expenditures, employee salaries and benefits, and construction expenditures.

The TSLAC database for FY2015 included more than 100 variables. These data and information are collected through an annual survey.³ The variables used to evaluate economic impacts included:

- Wages and benefits
- Size of collection
- Other operating expenses including replacement furniture and equipment
- Expenditures on wages and benefits, collection, and miscellaneous
- Indirect costs
- Total operating expenses
- Capital outlay
- Total full-time equivalents of paid library staff
- Local fiscal year beginning date

Data was provided for each library's fiscal year, which began October 1 for 71% of Texas public libraries, January 1 for 20% of libraries, with the other 9% having different start months. The monthly timing difference for the fiscal years was inconsequential for the economic impact study.

Capital Outlay

Of the 548 public libraries, 127 reported capital outlays totaling \$62 million in FY2015. These outlays may include building sites, new buildings, additions, or renovations. These outlays may also include purchases of furniture, equipment,

³ The report form and variable descriptions may be found in either word or pdf formats under the heading *2015 Annual Report Blank Worksheet* at: <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/arsma/index.html#LibPAs>.

books, vehicles, computer systems, and other one-time extraordinary purchases noted in the reporting form.⁴

Operating Expenditures

Operating expenditures in FY2015 totalled \$501.4 million. These expenditures are comprised of labor costs, library collections (e.g., books, periodicals, etc.), and other supplies and services purchased for library operations. Wages and benefits comprised 67.8% of operating expenditures, demonstrating the largely labor-intensive nature of library operations. Operating expenditures are less volatile than capital expenditures.

Employment, Wages, and Benefits

Library full-time equivalent (FTE) employment totaled 6,861 in FY2015. This number was converted to a headcount based on micro-data for the input-output model, yielding 8,232 full- and part-time employees. These workers earned \$340.1 million in FY2015, of which 27.4% was paid for employee benefits. Wages totaled \$247 million.

Collection

Library collections are reported in three formats: print, electronic, and other (e.g., microforms and audiovisuals). Libraries make ongoing purchases of collection items, and these ongoing purchases amounted to \$63.0 million in operating expenditures in FY2015, with \$36.2 million directed towards print materials, \$16.6 million for electronic materials and \$10.1 million for other collection items.

Other Operating Expenditures

Other operating expenditures reference the non-labor, non-collection library operations. These include supplies, software licenses, networks, Internets, and contracted personnel (i.e., facilities maintenance, consultants, auditors, etc.). Other operating expenditures totaled \$92.9 million in FY2015.

Library Revenue

Revenue for a private enterprise derives from the sale of goods and services, in which value was added to raw materials or intermediate inputs and resold with a margin. Public enterprises, like libraries, receive “income” through taxes, fees, and grants. Given the nonprofit status of libraries, revenues largely match expenses. For the public libraries in Texas, operating revenues totaled nearly \$508.3 million, and capital revenues totaled \$56.1 million, for a total of \$564.4 million in FY2015. Libraries have various revenue conduits, ranging from federal, state, and local sources, foundation and corporate grants, and fines and donations. While funding sources are varied, more than \$0.95 of every \$1.00 in library revenue (operating and capital) is from a local source, (i.e., from cities, counties, school districts, local donations etc.).

⁴ A variety of available data and longitudinal comparisons are available at: <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/pls/index.html>

Statewide Economic Impacts from Library Expenditures

Library expenditures represent the employment of individuals in local communities and purchases of goods and services, primarily from private industry vendors. The locale of these purchases varies by library, with the composition of the local economy often dictating what may or may not be sourced locally. Companies supplying products to libraries, in turn, employ and purchase from other companies, thus creating a multiplier effect. To calculate the multiplier effects and overall economic impacts, the research team used the input-output economic modeling tool IMPLAN. The IMPLAN software incorporates data (expenditures, jobs, etc.) and publically available secondary data on labor, wages, and output. The main input data were (1)

The \$563.4 million in direct library operating and capital expenditures in FY2015 (\$501.4 million in operating expenditures and \$62.0 million in capital expenditures as described earlier in this chapter); and (2) A total of 8,232 full- and part-time employees (6,861 full-time equivalent (FTE)).⁵ This direct spending in the State of Texas multiplies through other industries in the supply chain, ranging from real estate and wholesale trade, to food services and health care. IMPLAN captures this economic activity by using economic multipliers, social accounting matrices, and trade flow data unique to the State of Texas. In other words, statewide impacts were estimated using the Texas model of IMPLAN. The model then produced results expressed in terms of direct, indirect, and induced impacts on output, employment, and wages.⁶

As shown in table 2.1 library expenditures in FY2015 led to approximately \$976 million in total economic activity in the State of Texas. Total employment, full- and part-time, due to public library expenditures was 11,192.

These economic benefits were derived from the upstream economic linkages for library operations and construction, as well as from household spending on goods and services in the community. In other words, based on libraries' operating and capital expenditures, spending by vendors and households generated an additional \$453 million in economic impact and 2,960 jobs in Texas.

Overall, based on the \$566 million in direct expenditures, economic benefits as calculated by IMPLAN were \$976 million, for an ROI of 1.72—for every dollar expended, there is \$1.72 in statewide economic activity.

5 An additional \$2.63 million was added for the TSLAC share of electronic databases, as described further in chapter III.

6 Operating expenditures for leakage estimates were calculated by the IMPLAN model. Operating expenditures were categorized as Other Information Services in the model. Estimated construction expenditures were assigned as Nonresidential Building in the IMPLAN model.

Definitions

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): A measure of economic activity, GDP is the total value added by resident producers of final goods and services.

Gross Output (Output): The total value of production is gross output. Unlike GDP, gross output includes intermediate goods and services.

Value Added: The contribution of an industry or region to total GDP, value added equals gross output, net of intermediate input costs.

Leakage: Refers to spending that occurs outside the region of study.

Direct Impact: The measured economic activity (expenditures, employment, wages) recorded by the organization, in this case, public libraries.

Indirect Impact: Captures the additional activity related to libraries' business supply chains.

Induced Impact: Captures the impact of household spending driven off salaries earned by library employees, as well as indirect employees.

Multiplier Effect: Includes the direct, indirect, and induced impacts related to libraries spending to demonstrate the rippling effect of economic activity related to expenditures, employment, and wages.

TABLE 2.1. STATEWIDE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF LIBRARY EXPENDITURES, FY2015

Impact	Employment	Labor Income (In Millions)	Value Added (In Millions)	Output (In Millions)
Direct Effect	8,232	\$371	\$402	\$566
Indirect Effect	580	\$32	\$52	\$92
Induced Effect	2,380	\$113	\$199	\$351
Total Effect	11,192	\$516	\$653	\$976

Chapter III. Market Values of Library Services

Introduction

The economic impact of a library is comprised of two distinct types of impacts. The first type is the same as any other organization or business, regardless of its service, goal, or intent. An organization or business that hires individuals and purchases supplies will have a beneficial economic impact on its local community. As described at the end of Chapter II, total statewide economic activity from library salaries, operating expenditures, capital expenditures, and associated purchases by supplier companies and household spending in Texas surpassed \$976 million in FY2015.

The second major category of economic impacts/economic benefits is the value of services provided by the public libraries. This chapter enumerates eight types of services, adopts methodologies for capturing benefits, and derives an aggregate monetary value for each. Note that there are a variety of services that some public libraries perform that are not included. For example, some libraries serve as a locale for services provided by outside organizations, for instance private tutors who conduct sessions at a library and business organizations who counsel clients in rooms within a library. Some libraries rent meeting room and auditorium space. These are missing from the calculations.

Reference Services

One of the traditional services provided by libraries is a reference service in which patrons can ask librarians specific questions, and obtain reliable answers in a relatively short period of time. Unlike some other library services, there is no market equivalent for public libraries' reference services.⁷ Another problem in valuing reference services is determining the value of an accurate or inaccurate answer. How is it possible to calculate the economic effect of accurate answers for community residents or the costs to a community of having inaccurate answers? And how does one compare the value of accurate answers to different questions—are all questions of the same importance?

⁷ While there are many alternatives to library reference services that are free to use, these online mechanisms have a limited history and provide answers of undependable accuracy. See for example: www.google.com, www.yahoo.com, www.ipl.org, answers.yahoo.com, www.ask.com, www.wolframalpha.com, www.answers.com, and www.wikipedia.org. There have been bidding schemes operating at such sites as www.justanswer.com and www.mturk.com.

Without a reasonable market-based option, one method to value a library's reference service is by determining the amount of time librarians spend on patrons' questions and then factoring in compensation for librarians. This method has its own difficulties.⁸ In this approach the first step is to characterize reference questions. One major study found that 70.9% of reference questions take between 1-5 minutes to answer, 19.1% take between 6-10 minutes to answer, 7.9% of reference questions take more than 11 minutes to answer, and 2.1% of reference questions take an unknown time to answer.⁹

As with valuing other services in this report, we adopt conservative assumptions whenever such steps are needed. For the large proportion of reference questions, those that take between 1 and 5 minutes to answer, we will use an average of three minutes. For reference questions requiring 6-10 minutes to answer, we will use an average of 8 minutes. For those questions taking *more* than 11 minutes to answer, we will use 11 minutes. And for the small percentage of reference questions requiring an unknown amount of time, we will use the weighted average of the prior three categories (11, 8, 3), rounded down to 7 minutes.¹⁰

In 2015, Texas public libraries reported that they answered 14,628,965 reference questions.¹¹

If we use the percentages from the detailed 1998 study of Spencer and Dorsey, 70.9% would be questions that take between 1 and 5 minutes, or 10,371,936 reference questions. Multiplying that number of reference questions by three minutes and then dividing by sixty minutes per hour, equates to 518,597 hours.

Similar computations were made for the other categories of reference questions, which yielded the following:

19.1% were reference questions that require between 6 and 10 minutes, or 2,794,132 reference questions; multiplying by eight minutes and then dividing by sixty minutes per hour, gives 372,551 hours.

8 The problem with an equation based on this premise is that a more experienced librarian capable of answering fifteen questions in an hour will be valued less than a less experienced librarian only capable of answering five questions in an hour. In all cases, simple "directional" questions and "how to" questions about fines, library cards and so forth, are specifically excluded from being counted as reference questions.

9 Spencer, John S. & Dorsey, Luene (1998) Assessing time spent on reference questions at an urban university library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 24(4), pp. 290-294.

10 Presumably these times include that time in which library patrons must communicate their inquiry and reference librarians must understand the inquiry/question before being able to research and answer the inquiry.

11 This is an adjusted number that reflects additional (632,479) reference questions from the Pecos and Dallas Public Libraries. Nearly all of those questions were for the Dallas Public Library. The basic procedure was to use the per capita ratio of reference questions to population served for Dallas in 2011 (0.4887) and then use that same ratio for the 2015 population served.

7.9% were reference questions that require 11 minutes or more, or 1,155,688 reference questions; multiplying that number of reference questions by eleven minutes and then dividing by sixty minutes per hour, gives 211,876 hours.

2.1% or 307,208 were of unknown duration and assumed to require an average of 7 minutes to answer; multiplying by seven minutes and then dividing by sixty minutes per hour, yields 35,841 hours.

These different categories of reference questions combine to 1,138,865 hours in 2015. A gross estimate from the 2015 survey is that a library employee on average has an hourly cost (salary and benefits) of \$23.83, based on 2080 hours per year. Multiplying the 1,138,865 hours by the hourly rate of \$23.83 yields a total value of \$27.1 million (\$27,141,069) for reference services.

By this method, the average value of a reference question statewide would be approximately \$1.86 (\$27,141,069 divided by 14,628,965 reference questions).

This value is extremely low compared to other libraries and online library calculators. The current ALA online value calculator estimates the value to be \$7.00 per question,¹² while the state of Maine estimates the value at \$15.00.¹³ In the recent reports, the value from Salt Lake County was \$7.24, Santa Clara County was \$16.72, and Toronto was the equivalent of \$14.11. Because of the extremely low figure derived by the hourly approach (\$1.86), in this instance we believe there is ample justification for using a different value. However, rather than choosing one of the three alternative values, the hourly value will be increased by 50% to \$2.79. Using that value per reference question yields a total value of \$40,814,812.

Every other possible per unit value would have generated totals in excess of \$105 million, and nearly \$245 million if the Santa Clara County value had been used. Even those numbers may be low estimates as the per unit values from Salt Lake County, Santa Clara County, and Toronto were from several years ago.

12 See http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/advocacyuniversity/toolkit/makingthecase/library_calculator

13 <http://www.maine.gov/msl/services/calculator.htm>

Programs

Programs provided at Texas public libraries are conservatively valued at slightly below \$49 million (\$48,795,845). Of the 548 public libraries responding to the FY2015 TSLAC annual report, only 11 did not conduct training programs or workshops to their patrons. In 2014-15, public libraries provided 251,258 workshops, training, or other educational programs to more than 6 million library patrons. A majority of these programs, 54%, were provided for children. The programs for children were also more widely attended--71% percent of those who attended any program were children and parents at children's programs.

Programs for young children are focused on instilling a love of books, promoting reading, and frequently involve story-telling or craft projects. Programs for young adults and adults are more varied. While there are book discussion clubs and hobby-oriented programs, many adult programs are devoted to improving an individual's literacy, computer literacy, job skills, or job prospects. And many are oriented to businesses. In the 2012 Bureau of Business Research survey of public libraries, more than 40% of the library directors who responded to a specific question said their libraries provided programs and workshops specifically focused on business-related skills such as:

- preparing/updating a resume and searching for a job;
- developing marketing literature;
- researching issues related to their business; and
- business counseling.

Ideally, we would be able to derive an estimate by reviewing similar types of programs offered by other organizations. Unfortunately, similar types of programs are relatively uncommon. Perhaps the most similar are provided by YMCA and YWCA-type organizations. However, these services are generally provided to members who pay both membership fees and program fees for multiple events, making it difficult to estimate the value of a single-session workshop. Another potential comparison involves museums, as museums often have traveling exhibits and events with a supplemental fee for the exhibit. These fees can be quite expensive but such exhibits rarely are oriented to children per se. The best available estimates for the values of Texas public library programs, however, are probably those provided by libraries elsewhere. After reviewing such estimates and the online library calculators, a conservative estimate for each type of library program is shown in the third column of Table 3.1. below.

TABLE 3.1. STATEWIDE VALUE OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS IN FY2015

	Number of Patrons	Fee/Value Per Patron	Total Value
Children's Programs	4,315,355	\$6.50	\$28,049,807
Young Adult Programs	427,754	\$9.50*	\$ 4,063,663
Adult Programs	1,334,590	\$12.50	\$16,682,375
Total	6,077,699		\$48,795,845

** This value was determined by being halfway between that of an adult fee and a child fee.*

The most recent library studies and calculators have estimated program values ranging from \$7 to \$42 per patron, per event.¹⁴ Using this methodology the average fee per patron would be \$8.03, which is similar to the lower amounts in that range of \$7 to \$42 in other library reports.

A final note on the value of programs—More than 1,881,000 individuals were trained in the use of electronic resources in 2015. No value has been calculated for this training for two reasons. First, there is likely to be some overlap between this number and the attendance at programs. To include a separate value would effectively be valuing the training twice. Second, it is unknown to what extent there is overlap. Simple correlation values of the training numbers with program attendance by young adults, adults, and total are low, suggesting the overlap may not be substantial. Yet, it is unclear how much overlap there is, and in such an instance, we provide no estimate of a value in keeping with the overall conservative approach used throughout this analysis.

¹⁴ The Salt Lake County library study of July 2013 estimated values of \$9 for adults and \$7 for young adults and children. Santa Clara County (California) estimated adult and young adult programs at \$16 and children's programs at \$14. In Toronto's late 2013 report, adult and senior program values were estimated at the US equivalent of \$14.11, while the program values for children and teens at the US equivalent of \$42.34.

Volunteers

Volunteers in libraries provided their communities with \$20 million worth of services (\$20,159,826) in FY2015. The vast majority of public libraries in Texas supplement their full- and part-time staffs with volunteers to provide services. In FY2015, more than 1.1 million hours (1,128,138 hours) were donated to Texas' public libraries, providing the volunteers with professional experience and the community with additional services.¹⁵

Information from the 2015 statewide survey illustrates the importance of volunteer staff for Texas' libraries. All but a handful (15) of libraries utilize volunteers: 20 libraries had the equivalent of 5 or more full-time employees, three libraries had the equivalent of more than 20 full-time employees, and a fourth library had more than 68,000 volunteer hours, the equivalent of 32 full-time employees donated in a year. Ten public libraries are run exclusively by volunteers.

The Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) specifies that the value of volunteer services be included in financial statements, grant proposals and annual reports based on the fair market value of those services.¹⁶ To comply with that standard, Independent Sector, a nonprofit support organization, creates an annual report on the average value of volunteer hours by state.¹⁷ In 2015, Independent Sector identified the average value of volunteers for the State of Texas to be \$25.11 per hour.¹⁸ (Please see Table 3.2.)

A gross estimate from the 2015 TSLAC survey is that a public library employee on average has an hourly cost (salary and benefits) of \$23.83, based on 2080 hours per year. This is a composite of all employees: those who have master's degrees or otherwise hold the title of "Librarian;" administrators, coordinators, conservators, instructors, information technology specialists, clerical staff, and shelving assistants.

Based on the TSLAC Annual Report information, approximately 32% of employees at Texas' public libraries have master's degrees from ALA accredited programs or otherwise hold the title of "Librarian." Other employees include administrators, coordinators, conservators, instructors, information technology specialists, clerical staff, shelving assistants, and many other specialists in larger libraries.¹⁹

¹⁵ This total was based on the TSLAC survey results and supplemented with 1476 hours, which was the number from 2011 for 15 libraries in 2015 that had missing data for volunteers. This adjustment comprised about 0.13 percent, or slightly more than one-tenth of one percent.

¹⁶ FASB Standard No. 116 & 117

¹⁷ http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

¹⁸ In the past, a unit of Points of Light, HandsOn Network, provided estimates for volunteers specified by job title rather than by state. In 2011 there were three job titles for volunteers in libraries, with hourly compensation ranging from \$12.43 per hour to \$28.86 per hour. Such information no longer appears to be available.

¹⁹ <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/careers/paths/listsupportstaff>

TABLE 3.2. POTENTIAL VALUES OF VOLUNTEER HOURS IN FY2015

Independent Sector (2015)	
National average for volunteers	\$23.56
Texas average for volunteers	\$25.11
Average Salaries/Benefits for FY2015 TSLAC Survey—Average Hourly Rate	\$23.83

Note: All amounts are salaries and fringe benefits.

Because detailed information about the types of services provided and donated by volunteers in Texas' public libraries are unavailable, one must make assumptions. Volunteers provide a range of services from unskilled labor to specialized assistance, and volunteers have all types of skills and experiences. However, we do not know what proportions of volunteers possess and contribute different skills. If one makes the assumption that volunteers mirror the paid employees, then an hourly rate of \$23.83 for volunteers is appropriate. It seems doubtful, however, that the volunteers' duties and responsibilities match those of full-time employees; therefore, a discount of 25% is being applied to the average hourly rate of \$23.83, yielding a volunteer hourly rate of \$17.87. That is certainly higher than what many library volunteers could command but also lower than what volunteers would receive for operating an entire library and substantially lower than the Texas average hourly compensation for volunteers.

With 1.12 million hours of volunteer services provided to public libraries, with each hour valued at slightly less than \$18, volunteers contributed services to their communities valued at approximately \$20.16 million.

In-Library Use of Materials

Library patrons not only use computers, electronic databases, wi-fi, and check out books and electronic media in different formats, they read periodicals and other materials inside a library. Identifying the extent of this activity and placing a value on it statewide is challenging. Yet an attempt must be made as value is being provided to users.

Data have been collected regularly about in-library use of materials on the annual, nationwide Public Library Data Surveys (PLDS), even though fewer libraries report data for that metric than for any other library metric. For instance, in the 2013 PLDS (2012 results) there were 473 reporting libraries for in-library use of materials, whereas 1,579 libraries reported data for programs, 1,590 libraries reported interlibrary loans, 1,647 libraries reported annual circulation, and 1,262 libraries reported print circulation.

The normal procedure for compiling in-library usage data is “observational counts.” Instructions to public libraries by the Ontario Ministry responsible for libraries are as follows:

In your typical week survey,...Report the number of materials used inside the library and not checked out. Count any items removed from their usual location by staff or library users. Include reference materials, circulating materials, magazines, newspapers and all other materials used in the library.

- *Count a vertical file, pamphlet file, multi-media kit or language learning kit as a single item - do not count each as a separate element;*
- *Do not count audio-visual items unless they were used at viewing/listening stations available in the branch;*
- *Do not include items returned from an outside circulation²⁰*

A number of academic articles have identified limitations of the observational counts.²¹ Yet if the alternative is to omit any value for an activity that is known to occur regularly, then it seems preferable to provide at least some estimate of value.

Because the annual TSLAC surveys do not request data on in-library usage, a circuitous method was devised to provide a gross estimate. The first approach reviewed the annual PLDS survey reports and compared the mean and medians for

²⁰ Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Sport, based on personal correspondence with Kimberly Silk, September 2016.

²¹ See Richard E. Rubin, “Measuring the In-house Use of Materials in Public Libraries,” *Public Libraries* 25 (1986) and Rebecca D. Richardson, “The State of In-Library Materials Use at the Cresson Public Library: A Case Study,” *Current Studies in Librarianship*, Fall 2011, Vol. 31 Issue 1.

In-Library Usage and Print Circulation. For 2013 the numbers were:

	Mean	Median
In Library	271,500	25,891
Print Circulation	706,751	157,581
Percentage	38.4%	16.4%

For 2011, only the means were calculated in the PLDS data:

	Mean
In Library	309,926
Print Circulation	822,005
Percentage	37.7%

The Toronto Library Report also provided In Library data and Print Circulation data:

In Library	7,141,558
Print Circulation	19,714,304
Percentage	36.2%

The three percentages (mean for the 2013 PLDS, mean for the 2011 PLDS, and mean for Toronto) are quite similar: 38.4%, 37.7%, and 36.2%. Because of the conservative approach, the lowest of the three will be selected: 36.2%. From the latest TSLAC annual survey, print circulation for public libraries was 103,553,860. In-library usage therefore would be a maximum of 37,279,390 ($103,553,860 \times .362$).

Researchers performing the analysis of the Toronto Library utilized a range of unit values: a value without any discount (a high value in their view); a value that was discounted 80% from the high value, and a midpoint value. For In-Library Use, the high value was the same as that for adult circulation (the equivalent of \$19.75) and the discounted value was the equivalent of \$3.95.

Again, in this report the most conservative choice will be made. Consequently, the 2015 print book circulation value for Texas will first be discounted by 80%. Based on the 2015 print book circulation value of \$8.78, the after discount value would be: \$1.76 ($\$8.78 \times .20$). Then because of potential data issues with determining in-library usage, this value will be further discounted by half. Multiplying the discounted value of \$0.88 with the in-library use figure of 37,279,390 generates an estimated value for this activity of \$32,805,863.

Computer Terminals and Internet Access

Computer terminals with internet access are a significant economic resource provided by Texas public libraries. Library directors in a statewide survey said patrons used the internet for a wide variety of purposes that ranged from education to employment to basic needs.²² Some of the online activities specifically mentioned were to:

- perform homework and research for classes from grade school to college;
- take continuing education courses, online training, and webinars;
- train and test for job certifications and licenses;
- search, and apply, for jobs;
- apply for unemployment benefits and social assistance;
- apply for disaster aid as well as find family and friends during and after natural disasters;
- work short-term, paid, online jobs, such as on Mechanical Turk™;
- develop and operate online businesses by placing and receiving orders;
- research price comparisons;
- market new products;
- use online banking; and
- file taxes.

Multiple libraries stressed the value to their patrons of being able to secure, maintain, and update their certifications and licenses by using library internet access. Without internet access, directors said these patrons would lose their jobs. Other library directors reported that without internet access, some patrons would lose their businesses--numerous library directors mentioned that patrons were running small businesses entirely via internet at their library. These businesses ranged from an independent real estate inspector, to a trader in used car parts, to various direct selling members, and other types of businesses.

Directors pointed out that even those patrons who have home internet access often use the library internet access because of its greater bandwidth and faster service. And as one library director commented, not all patrons have the option of having personalized internet access at their residence. Ranchers and others in rural areas in particular have difficulty obtaining reliable and reasonably priced internet at their residences. The same can be said for many disadvantaged individuals in urban areas—while broadband is theoretically available to them in their neighborhood, in practical terms they often lack the resources for an up-to-date computer or broadband access in their residence.

²² More than 62% of the library directors who responded to the 2012 survey by the Bureau of Business Research said that internet access was “extremely beneficial,” while a further 20% said it was “quite beneficial” for their patrons. Furthermore, 56% of library directors statewide reported that internet access was the single most important resource provided by their libraries.

Economic Benefits

Long-term economic benefits to library patrons and the community at large from internet access are difficult to estimate precisely. One approach would be to solicit information from patrons about the value of internet access to them. Because that would entail a large user survey, this report used a different method: examining the cost of obtaining internet access from an alternate source.²³

While public libraries provide internet access free of charge to their patrons, there are a few companies from which the resource can be purchased.²⁴ The standard rate set by these for-profit companies is \$18-\$21 per hour, using a rented computer. (Commercial options do not exist in many smaller communities, or even in some areas of larger metropolitan areas.) Nonetheless, for the purpose of deriving an estimate of the monetary value of internet access via a public library, the commercial rate is the best option.

An elaborate procedure was used in the 2012 report and will not be repeated here. (Please refer to that report for a complete description of the procedure.) Basically, from that procedure we calculated that the average session length was 1.16 hours. Because some libraries did not report a maximum length, we believe the figure of 1.16 hours is very conservative.

Second, we applied the hourly rate of \$15 per hour and then computed the average internet session at \$17.40 (1.16 hours multiplied by the same hourly rate that was used four years ago, \$15.00).²⁵

Third, we calculated the statewide estimate, utilizing the total number of internet access sessions, information that was obtained from the 2015 Public Library Annual Report. In calendar year 2014, there were 16,876,575 sessions on internet-accessible computer terminals in public libraries in Texas.²⁶ At an average value of \$17.40 per session, public library computer terminals saved users an estimated \$293,652,405 in 2015.

This figure is conservative. As noted earlier, some libraries do not report a maximum length so the average session length in reality is likely to be greater than 1.16

23 Salt Lake County's report asked about willingness to pay for computer access, and the value was estimated at approximately \$80 annually per user. Slightly over one-fourth of patrons in Salt Lake County reported that they used computer terminals at one of the public libraries.

24 The largest business to provide this resource is FedEx Office, which only provides it in a small portion of their store fronts. Many other studies have used this commercial comparison.

25 There is mixed information about the values of computer terminals in other studies. The current ALA calculator is \$12/hour. The Toronto and Santa Clara County reports use values less than \$10/hour. Salt Lake County uses \$18/hour. Because the majority of values are less than the commercial rate of \$21/hour, using the prior hourly rate in the 2012 report seems appropriate. A lower rate does not seem reasonable given distance and access issues in Texas compared to library systems in more urban areas.

26 This number was derived after including an estimate in 2014 for the Dallas Public Library, based on their reported usage in prior TSLAC reports and a review of computer usage in seven other large Texas public library systems.

hours. This report also cannot reasonably estimate the values of internet access at public libraries in areas of Texas (largely in the Panhandle, West Texas, and parts of South Texas) without commercial alternatives within a ninety-mile radius. In these situations, users would have a significant commute when they wanted to access the internet, and the value to patrons of having internet access locally would be much higher than \$15/hour. Thus the value of internet access statewide is almost certainly underestimated, rather than overestimated.

Wireless Internet Access

Wireless internet is offered by nearly all public libraries in Texas and is a service widely used and considered extremely important by librarians. While somewhat dated, in the 2012 statewide survey of public library directors conducted by the Bureau of Business Research, wireless internet access was listed as the single most important resource provided to their patrons by 13% of the directors.²⁷

Library patrons use wireless internet connections for the same purposes as they use the computer terminals within a public library, but wireless provides several advantages. First, it allows patrons to use their own portable computers and digital devices. This enables users to save documents on their own computers as well as keep materials without having to print a hardcopy version. Second, users generally have unrestricted access via wireless, as there is no competition with other users for a computer terminal or limits on the time they have access. Third, users can access a library's wireless service after normal library hours, if they are willing to work within a small distance beyond the walls of their library building. Many examples were cited by library directors of users parking near the library after hours to access wireless (wi-fi) signals.

Although nearly all public libraries offer wi-fi, not all libraries methodically track the number of digital devices accessing their wireless networks. In the 2015 TSLAC annual survey the number of wi-fi sessions was documented at 15,853,077. However, this was the number from only about 73% of public libraries. In other words, more than 140 public libraries did not report data on wi-fi sessions. To provide a more accurate estimate, two different methods were employed. First, a simple proportional approach assumed that if 15.8 million sessions occurred from 73% of the libraries, then if the additional 27% of public libraries had reported, a total of 21.6 million sessions would have occurred. A second approach assumed that the number of wi-fi sessions would be directly proportional to the number of available computers in libraries.²⁸ In this approach we eliminated those libraries that did not collect wi-fi data and then examined what percentage of the total number of available computers existed, compared to the total number before excluding any of the libraries. That percentage was 76.1%. Because the two methods provided reasonably close percentages (73% and 76.1%) and because the correlation was relatively strong, it is reasonable to assume that actual wi-fi usage is considerably higher than the number provided by librarians in the TSLAC survey. The more conservative percentage of 76.1% would indicate that the actual number of wi-fi sessions in 2015 was 20,831,901 ($15,853,077 / 0.761$).

27 An additional 52% of library directors said that internet access in general was the most important resource they provided.

28 A correlation of .75 exists between number of computer terminals and number of wi-fi sessions, a relatively strong relationship. This provides justification for the assumption and also indicates that libraries which do not collect wi-fi data are quite similar to those that do.

Economic Benefits of Wireless Internet Access

As with the earlier section which examined the value of computer terminals and internet access within libraries, we could estimate the monetary value of wireless access by looking at alternative providers. Costs of wireless internet, however, vary from provider to provider and generally involve long-term contracts or are subject to indirect costs, or both. Because of the variety and complexity for alternative providers, in this instance, a more direct approach is appropriate. The Santa Clara County unit value for wi-fi in 2012 was \$6 and in Toronto it was the equivalent of \$4.70. In the 2012 report we used a unit value of \$5, and that seems reasonable for 2015 as well. The unit value is for each use, regardless of the length of that use.

Therefore, the aggregate value of wireless internet access provided by Texas public libraries in 2015 is more than \$104 million annually (\$104,159,505). This estimate is a straightforward multiplication of \$5.00 per use applied to 20,831,901 uses.

Electronic Databases

Increasingly, electronic databases are being used by patrons of Texas public libraries. In FY2015, more than 500 public libraries offered a minimum of TexShare's 62 databases, a co-operative program of TSLAC and local public libraries. Under the TexShare program, patrons have access to databases in the following categories:

- Books and Literature—12
- Science and Technology—12
- Homework—11
- General Information—9
- Business—7
- Genealogy and History—6
- Health and Medicine—6
- Spanish Language—3
- Career Development, Language Learning, Newspapers—1 each

A more detailed description of the databases available for the time period is available at: <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/texshare/databasecontractlistfy2015.html>

The scope and size of the databases is more apparent in the number of full-text titles available through the TexShare resources:

Newspapers and Newswires	11,080,696
Full text Journals	5,087,966
Primary Source Documents	310,082
EBSCO eBooks	28,281
Reference Books	5,718
Genealogy Documents	2.7 billion

Accessing this wealth of information has become increasingly common. In the FY2015 period, patrons at public libraries performed more than 75 million searches, up dramatically from 9.7 million searches four years earlier.²⁹ As another perspective, there are more than 200,000 TexShare searches conducted every day by public library patrons, based on vendor data provided to TSLAC.

Because of this large number, it is reasonable to ask if there may be overlap between the number of database searches and other public library services: reference questions, computer usage, and wi-fi sessions. Undoubtedly there is some overlap; the issue is whether it is significant or minimal.

On reference questions, there appears not to be overlap to a great extent. According to a researcher at the TSLAC, *"...Reference transactions are generally face-to-face interactions between library staff and patrons, and the libraries track those numbers and then report them to us."* In many cases, electronic databases are used by patrons

²⁹ There were approximately 10% fewer sessions, roughly 68 million, in contrast to the number of searches, 75 million. The number of searches will be the unit of analysis in this description.

in lieu of asking reference librarians specific queries, as well as for conducting searches and research that patrons know cannot be performed by librarians.

Yet, there is certainly some overlap with computer usage and wi-fi usage by patrons. At present there is no good method for determining the extent of this overlap. And for this reason, again, we will adopt a conservative approach and conservative assumptions to valuing this service.

In the other recent reports about library impacts, a fairly consistent value has been used for database searches:

ALA Calculator:	\$19.95
Toronto (US equivalent):	\$23.52
Salt Lake County:	\$20.00
Santa Clara County (CA):	\$37.40 ³⁰

There are multiple reasons, however, for adopting a lower value than those used in other studies. First, there is some overlap of this service with computer usage and wi-fi. How much is unknown, and there is no current way of identifying the extent. Second, TSLAC acknowledges that there is some uncertainty about the data, given the available tracking technologies of the vendors. Also there are some known cases of particular library systems showing dramatically large increases in monthly search numbers. Finally, per capita search metrics for Texas appear much higher than other jurisdictions. While the content of the database packages may be quite different, this is another possible reason to err on the conservative side.

For these reasons, a very conservative value per search of \$2 was selected. Based on this per search unit value, the total value of database searches in public libraries was \$150,167,176 in FY2015.³¹

30 Different classes of database searches were valued differently, ranging from \$5 each for foreign language and indexes/directories, to \$25 each for most categories, and at \$200 each for company/business information. Dividing the total value of all searches by the total number of searches yielded \$37.40 for the mean.

31 According to TSLAC, if each public library would have purchased the same package of 62 databases, the total cost would have been at least 10 times more than that in the absence of the group discount.

Circulation of Materials

To derive the value of circulation materials provided by Texas public libraries requires several different data sources, information about circulation materials (books, DVDs, e-books etc.) and a few reasonable assumptions. First, books will be considered, then other materials, and finally total values will be computed for circulation transactions by public library patrons.

For books, in the prior study, a complicated, multi-step process was performed. The first step was to determine the proportion of new book purchases, by category. Then one category, Higher-Education, Professional, and Scholarly, of books was deleted as that category is rarely purchased by public libraries. The re-computed proportions for several categories were then compared against actual circulation proportions for public libraries in Texas. The comparisons showed some differences, but within reasonable approximations. Then we determined the average cost of a new hardcover book in each category. We then multiplied that average cost by the proportion of new book purchases by proportion of new book purchases by category to determine the average new book cost. Then that price was severely discounted (80%) for a variety of reasons, to arrive at a per book circulation value of \$8.63.

In retrospect, that complicated process seems unnecessary, and for FY2015, a less complicated approach will be used. As can be seen in Table 3.3 below, a variety of values have been identified in recent analyses. (Blanks indicate no value was assigned to that category.)

TABLE 3.3. POTENTIAL VALUES OF BOOKS, BASED ON OTHER SOURCES

	ALA Calculator	State of Maine	State of Minnesota	Santa Clara County*	Salt Lake County	City of Toronto**
	2015	2014	2010	FY 2012	2013	2013
Adult Books	17	18	7.48	9.5	8.61	7.04
Young Adult Books	12		6.48			6.10
Children's Books	17	10	6.48	8.75	4.81	6.10

*Average of Low/High

**Discounted 50%

Because of the variation, one approach is to exclude the highest and lowest values for adult books and children's books, and then take the mean or average. That would provide the resulting values in Table 3.4.

TABLE 3.4. DERIVED VALUES OF BOOKS, BASED ON OTHER SOURCES

	ALA Calculator	State of ME	State of MN	Santa Clara Co.*	Salt Lake County	City of Toronto**	Average
	2015	2014	2010	FY 2012	2013	2013	
Adult Books	17		7.48	9.5	8.61		\$10.65
Young Adult Books	12		6.48			6.10	\$8.19
Children's Books		10	6.48	8.75		6.10	\$7.83

*Average of Low/High

**Discounted 50%

Because the 2015 TSLAC survey does not differentiate between young adult books and adult books, a blended rate of \$9.42 will be used.

There were a total of slightly more than 103 million book items in physical format circulated in FY2015. Of that number, approximately 40% were items marked as children's and 60% as adult or young adult. Therefore, the value of book circulation transactions:

Children	41,486,566 X \$7.83 = \$324,839,812
Adult/Young Adult	62,067,294 X \$9.42 = \$584,673,909
Total Book Circulation Value:	\$909,513,721

Non-book, that is digital format, circulation values follow a somewhat different approach. Non-book items can be divided into two main categories:

Video and audio items: 51.6%,
E-books: 48.4%.³²

DVDs are available as a single purchase item from one company (RedBox) at many locations in Texas and could be rented for \$1.50 per day in FY2015. Alternative sources for multiple rentals are Netflix, Amazon, and several smaller services. A per unit value of \$1.50 will be used for both DVDs and CDs.

32 Because circulation data does not distinguish between audio and video items, these percentages were based on the classification of items in the collections. In terms of actual circulation, it is reasonable to assume that e-books comprise a higher proportion than video and audio formats.

E-books are a different matter. Other library valuation research present values that vary considerably both in absolute terms and in relation to the value of a book in physical format. And there are choices available online from free e-books up to and including e-books of new releases at \$14.99. While many cost below \$10, there is also data that a higher per-unit value should be used for e-books: the average per volume price for more than 232,000 e-books in 2013 was \$27.83.³³ Without choosing a large sample of genres, authors, etc. and deriving a blended per unit value, any choice of value will be somewhat subjective. For this report, we see no reason to value e-books differently than a hardcopy format.

Based on circulation data from the 2015 public library survey, the statewide calculations for digital formats are:

Video and audio items: 5,424,113 X \$1.50 = \$8,136,170

E-books: 5,091,087 X \$8.78 = \$44,699,744

And the value for all circulation transactions are:

Total Value of Book Circulation Transactions: \$909,513,721

Total Value of Digital Circulation Transactions: \$52,835,914

Total Value of Circulation Transactions in FY2015: \$962,349,635

33 See Catherine Barr and Constance Harbison, "Book Title Output and Average Prices: 2009-2013," in *Library and Book Trade Almanac* (formerly *The Bowker Annual*), 2014, 59th Edition, Information Today, Inc.: Medford, NJ., page 473.

Chapter IV. Summary of Quantifiable Economic Impacts

Public libraries in the State of Texas generate significant economic impacts. In FY2015, more than 11,000 jobs in Texas were dependent on public library expenditures. When analyzed as business and organizational entities, public libraries produced \$976 million in local economic activity. In addition, the total value of eight public library services was conservatively estimated at \$1.652 billion.

TABLE 4.1. STATEWIDE VALUES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES, FY2015

Service	Value
Reference Services	\$40,814,812
Programs	\$48,795,845
Volunteers	\$20,159,826
In-Library Use	\$32,805,863
Computer Terminals	\$293,652,405
Wireless Internet Access	\$104,159,505
Electronic Databases	\$150,167,176
Circulation (All Formats)	\$962,349,635
Total All Services	\$1,652,905,067

Total economic benefits from Texas' public libraries in FY2015, therefore, were approximately \$2.629 billion.

Spending by public libraries in FY2015 totaled \$566.0 million: \$504.0 million in operating expenditures and \$62.0 million in capital expenditures.³⁴

Overall, with economic benefits of \$2.629 billion and expenditures of \$566 million, there was an ROI of 4.64—for every dollar, there was \$4.64 in statewide economic activity.

Table 4.2 shows the financial benefit ratio (return on investment) for recent prior studies of library impacts. Comparisons of these ratios across different jurisdictions must be conducted with caution and, in some instances, may be inappropriate due to different types of services and other localized conditions. Nonetheless, the Texas ratio appears in line with the ratios evident elsewhere.

³⁴ The operating expenditure total includes \$2.65 million from TSLAC for its share of the TexShare electronic databases.

TABLE 4.2. RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN RECENT REPORTS

Jurisdiction	Year	Return on the Dollar
STATES		
Minnesota	FY2010	\$4.62
COUNTIES		
Salt Lake County, UT	2012	\$5.47-\$6.07
Santa Clara County, CA	2012	\$2.50-\$5.17
Toledo Lucas County, OH	2015	\$3.87
CITIES		
Toronto	2012	\$4.63
Texas	FY2015	\$4.64

Table 4.3 on the next page shows the respective ROI figures as reported in the earlier 2012 report. Again, Texas appears in line with many other jurisdictions.

TABLE 4.3. RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN SELECTED EARLY REPORTS

Jurisdiction	Return on the Dollar
STATES	
Colorado	\$4.99
Florida	\$8.32
Indiana	\$4.76
South Carolina	\$4.48
Texas – Statewide 2011	\$4.42
Wisconsin	\$4.06
CITIES	
Charlotte	\$4.61
Southwestern Ohio	\$3.81

Note: Summary statistics were unavailable for Philadelphia and Seattle.

Compared to the earlier analysis performed in late 2012 for FY2011, the ROI increased by 5%, with most of that due to inclusion of new service values. The ROI

would have increased by a greater percentage but total economic impact is quite dependent on the mixture of spending. Compared to FY2011, overall spending increased in FY2015, although there were fewer capital expenditures and more operating expenditures.³⁵

The impact of Texas public libraries is still underestimated. Public libraries serve their communities by making information and learning readily accessible to any individuals who choose to enter a library's doors or, in recent years, use a library's online portal. The individuals who use the libraries directly benefit by gaining knowledge and ideas. Even those who choose not to use their local public library benefit by being part of a more educated community. Substantial research has concluded that economic growth and leadership is highly correlated with highly educated communities. Public libraries offer every person an opportunity to improve his or her education and every business an opportunity to improve their productivity. Public libraries are an overlooked factor in economic leadership among states.

³⁵ Capital expenditures, for instance, construction outlays, have high multipliers and greater "ripples" in terms of economic impacts.

Appendices

Appendix A: Summaries of Recent Impact Studies

Appendix B: Bibliography and References

Appendix C: Performing Organization and Project Staff

Appendix A: Summaries of Recent Impact Studies

States

Minnesota

Counties

Santa Clara County, California

Salt Lake County, Utah

Toledo Lucas County, Ohio

Cities

Toronto, Ontario

State of Minnesota

Title

**Minnesota Public Libraries' Return On Investment, University of Minnesota
Duluth, Labovitz School of Business and Economics, December 2011**

Goals

This research was designed to answer several questions: (a) what are the levels of support among the state's residents for public library services; (b) how do state residents want public library services to be financed if changes were required to maintain or expand services; (3) what economic impacts are due to public libraries in the state; and (4) what is the cost-benefit ratio/ROI of public libraries.

Methodologies

Two surveys were conducted: a statewide, general population survey of 804 households and a more detailed survey of 557 public library users throughout the state. The user survey was the main method used in determining the value of public library services. Rather than estimating benefits for specific library services, researchers relied on contingent valuation, asking patrons directly how much they would pay or exchange for all library services, that is a bundle of library services rather than individual library services. Contingent valuation is essentially a "willingness-to-pay" approach or the "willingness-to-accept" approach, which generates estimates for how much a patron say they would pay to obtain a service, or how much they would accept to give up the service.

Another component of the research was determining the economic benefits of public libraries with the economic model IMPLAN. Indirect/induced employment, indirect/induced labor income, and indirect/induced economic impacts were computed based on public library employment, labor income, and spending/expenditures as well as the economic profile of the State of Minnesota.

Results

Based on the user survey, researchers estimated that the average household would be willing and able to donate between \$31.7 and \$38.3 dollars annually, resulting in a total donation of \$65.4 to \$79.0 million annually, based on the number of Minnesota households. The researchers stated the estimated amounts should be considered "snapshots," as demand conditions could change frequently.

The combined totals for capital expenditures and operational expenditures in 2010 dollars were computed to be:

Employment	4,202
Payroll	\$296,329,531
Output	\$431,793,024

ROI Ratio(s)

Based on the willingness to pay estimates, the economic model amounts, and Minnesota's population, the economic contribution per capita totalled \$169.32. With local and county tax support per capita at \$36.67, the annual return per dollar of public tax support equalled \$4.62. That is the generally used ratio throughout the report, although in several sections, a lower ratio of \$2.50 was cited.

Other Findings:

The general population survey indicated that Minnesotans felt that public libraries are a very important part of a community, and that public library funding should remain the same or be increased. If additional resources were needed for public libraries to continue, there were divergent views about user fees, taxes and/or reducing services. The most frequently favored option was to raise taxes, not user fees and/or reduce services. However, the next most favored option was to increase user fees and/or reduce services and not alter taxes. Findings varied by the pattern of respondent and household use of public libraries, and background items such as household income, respondent gender, age, and geographic location.

Other pertinent details from the general population survey:

There was a higher level of household usage of public libraries among those in the Twin Cities area (83%) than elsewhere in Minnesota (72%).

There was no statistically significant difference in reported household usage of public libraries by men or women, although gender differences showed up in other patterns of usage.

There was no statistically significant difference between men and women on the question of whether public library support should be increased, remain the same, or be reduced.

In all income categories, to increase support, the highest percentage of respondents favored using taxes and oppose user fees or reduced service.

Those individuals with more education were more likely to report household use of a public library in the past year: 62% among those with some college or less education, 83% among those who have graduated from a technical or other college, and 92% among those with post-graduate work. There was no statistically significant difference between these education groups in their feeling of the importance of having a public library in every community as all groups felt this was important.

There was no statistically significant difference among age groups in the importance they expressed for there being a public library in every community, or on the question about whether public library support should be increased, remain

the same, or be reduced.

Researchers also identified the social return on investment (SROI) from Minnesota public libraries without attempting to measure the educational programs, literacy benefits, the expertise of the library staff, the library facility as a community gathering place, the “halo” spending by library users at establishments close to the library, and the value of a library’s enhancement to neighborhood real estate and community partnerships.

Santa Clara County, California

Title

Santa Clara County Library District, 2013 Return on Investment Report, Berk Consulting, Seattle Washington.

Goals

The Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD), which has 8 libraries and a bookmobile, serves more than 400,000 residents in the unincorporated portions of Santa Clara County and the cities of:

- Campbell
- Cupertino
- Gilroy
- Los Altos
- Los Altos Hills
- Milpitas
- Monte Sereno
- Morgan Hill
- Saratoga

Besides quantifying the SCCLD's benefits to the extent possible, the report sought to describe SCCLD's unquantified benefits. An extensive portion of this report is devoted to the library district's activities in:

Enhancing early literacy and youth education;
Promoting lifelong learning and personal growth;
Building and bridging diverse communities;
Providing access to information and technology for all; and
Supporting personal recreation and quality of life.

Examples are provided of the district's impacts on health and wellness, adult education, job and employment services, literacy, and being anchors of community life for county residents. Santa Clara County has an extensive variety of economic, social, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds, with over 100 languages and dialects are spoken by county residents according to the report. The

Library District has tailored its collections and programming to reflect the highest used languages and actively collects in 19 languages.

Methodologies

Five major categories of activities and services were examined in fiscal year 2011-2012:

- Circulation
- Programs
- Reference Services

- Space Usage
- Technology Usage (in-library terminals, wireless, and databases)

The quantitative methodology was standard: (a) identify the quantity of a service; (b) assign a value, usually both a high and a low value, based on the going rate to acquire a comparable good on the open market; and (c) for all circulation categories, apply a discount rate to the low value only. Unquantified benefits were identified primarily through interviews.

Results

Circulation values dominated the total benefits. The low and high calculations for each major category were as follows:

	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Circulation	\$50,995,113	\$105,631,651
Programs	\$1,621,340	\$4,161,784
Reference Services	\$2,945,808	\$8,849,375
Space Usage	\$77,350	\$324,050
Computers	\$1,936,901	\$4,439,814
Databases	\$24,848,725	\$47,706,559

ROI Ratio(s)

Total estimated benefits were computed at approximately \$83 million for a low estimate and \$171 million for the high estimate. Total expenditures were slightly over \$33 million for cost-benefit ratios of \$2.50 and \$5.17.

City of Toronto, Ontario

Title

So Much More: The Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto, University of Toronto, Martin Prosperity Institute, December 2013

Goals

Determine the ROI and total economic impact of the Toronto Public Library based on calculations for tangible benefits and spending. According to the report, direct tangible benefits are those that have an identifiable beneficiary while indirect tangible benefits are those from the re-spending of dollars within the community.

At the time of the study, Toronto's population was nearly 2.8 million. The library had 98 branches located across the City of Toronto, and most Toronto residents lived within a two-kilometer radius of a branch.

Based on a 2012 survey cited in the report, the Toronto Public Library is heavily utilized:

- Over 2 million residents are members;
- 72% of respondents used the library in the past year;
- 44% of the adult population uses the library once a month or more; and
- Nearly half of the adults taking a child to a library branch do so two or three times each month.

Methodologies

The study analysed the five main categories of Toronto Public Library programs and services:

- Collection Use – books, eTitles, CDs, DVDs, magazines, newspapers, and a museum and arts pass providing discounts;
- Programs – for children, teens, adults, and seniors to support literacy, culture, workforce development, and lifelong learning;
- Reference & Database Services – to support study and business development;
- Technology – access to computer technology and the Internet to support career development, personal research, and lifelong learning; and
- Space – used for reading, personal study, meeting, and collaboration.

Values for each service were based on the local comparative market price for a similar service, according to researchers. And in the case of circulation materials and materials used in the library, the actual cost of the item was discounted by 80% to account for the differences between borrowing and owning a book or other media item. (That left a residual value of 20% per item.) Whenever possible and appropriate, local Toronto prices were used to determine the value.

Two approaches were used that were different than those in other jurisdictions. First, all spending data were from a single year (2012), except for capital expenditures. For renovations, the average annual spending from 2007–2012 was used. Second, to calculate the indirect benefit, researchers applied a multiplier range of 1.4 to 2.0 instead of performing calculations with a specific economic model. To justify this approach, researchers provided information about multipliers in other recent economic impact studies evaluating comparable services. They also state that the 1.4 to 2.0 multiplier range is consistent with national and provincial multipliers used by Statistics Canada.

This report also introduced new measures to estimate the value of library space and materials delivery.

Results

Three estimates were computed for the values of services: low, mid-point, and high. Those amounts were: CAD \$352.5m, CAD \$680.8m, and CAD \$1,009.1m.³⁶

Three amounts also were generated for total economic impacts: Low – CAD \$612.1m, mid-point – CAD \$1,000.6m, and high – CAD \$1,389.1m

In general, the mid-point numbers were cited most frequently.

ROI Ratio(s)

Low, mid-point, and high ROIs were 244%, 463%, and 681%.

Other Findings

Values for individual services were:

	Low	Mid-Point	High
Collection Use	\$183.7	\$512.1	\$840.4
Programs		26.4	
Reference & Database Services		78.8	
Technology Access		25.9	
Meeting & Study Space		37.7	

Total economic impact for each household within the City of Toronto: \$955 CAD;

Total economic impact for each of Toronto's residents: \$358 CAD.

Based on the \$1 billion in direct tangible benefits (the High estimate) provided by the Toronto Public Library, each of the two million library members received as much as \$502 in total direct benefits.

³⁶ In millions of Canadian dollars (CAD\$). The exchange rate as of 12/31/2013 was 1 USD=1.0628 Canadian or CAD\$= 0.94095 USD.

Materials delivery was valued as a service at approximately \$15 million. Library members may place a circulating item on hold and have that item delivered to a branch chosen by the resident for pick-up. The value per “hold” was deemed equivalent to the cost of single fare for the Toronto Transit Commission at that time.

The meeting and study space amount of \$37.7 million was based on a series of assumptions and calculations. To calculate the economic benefit of meeting space, bookings of meeting rooms at branches were multiplied by the Library’s commercial rental rate, which was deemed comparable to the Toronto District School Board space rates of \$12.20 to \$50 per hour. That value was relatively small at \$1.4 million. The bulk of meeting space value (\$36.2 million) was derived by multiplying the 9 million annual visitors by a conservative value for work space in the Toronto.

Salt Lake County, Utah

Title

A Return on Investment Study of Salt Lake County Library Services, Javaid Lal, University of Utah, July 2013

Goals

Due to the financial contraction of 2008, all Salt Lake County departments were asked to justify their expenditures in conjunction with a countywide tax increase. This led library officials to support a study to quantify the monetary value of the library services and inform the public and other stakeholders about their return on investment (ROI). In addition to providing measurable results, the study obtained information from library users about their priorities.

At the time of the report, the Salt Lake County Library (SLCoLibrary) operated 18 community libraries and three reading rooms in 17 cities serving a population in excess of 825,000. During 2012, more than 4.5 million people visited SLCoLibrary branches and over 10.1 million connected virtually via the library website. More than 16 million items were checked out, which made SLCoLibrary the 12th largest circulating library in North America with 22.2 books per capita circulation. Salt Lake City and Murray City, with a combined population of more than 235,000, have their own libraries.

Methodologies

To calculate ROI for Salt Lake County Library Services (SLCoLibrary), a mixed-methods, multi-phase approach was employed. In the first phase of the study, an online survey was fielded to collect data from library patrons. The survey used the contingent valuation method by asking specific questions about patrons' library use and their willingness to pay for similar services in the absence of a library. Questions were asked about discrete services and not a bundle of services.

In the second phase of the study, 2012 library use statistics from SLCoLibrary were utilized in calculating monetary equivalents of the services provided by the library.

Actual usage and willingness to pay were determined for:

- Help from Library Staff

- Magazine borrowing

- Newspaper borrowing

- Book borrowing (hardcover, softcover, children's, E-book, audiobook)

- Computers

- Electronic resources

 - Electronic News & Magazines Subscription

Professional Journals Subscriptions
Business & Investment Resources Subscription
Consumer Reports Subscription
Genealogy And Family History Search

DVDs, CDs

Children's and adult's programs

In the third phase, indirect economic impact analysis was performed with the Rims II Regional Input-Output Modeling System. This analysis generated the economic ripple impacts on the local economy from library expenditures for employee wages, book, supplies, and construction activities.

The final phase aggregated the benefits from services and the direct and indirect economic impacts, and compared them to taxpayer costs. Unusually, capital/construction expenditures were considered one-time benefits and separated from other benefits, although not excluded from the ROI.

Results

ROI Ratio(s)

Salt Lake County taxpayers' combined return on investment was calculated at between \$5.47 and \$6.07 for every \$1.00 invested in library services. This was comprised of between \$3.09 and \$3.69 in direct benefits, \$1.57 in indirect benefits, and \$0.81 in one-time benefits for every \$1.00 invested by the Salt Lake County taxpayers.

Overall, SLCoLibrary provided goods and services worth \$121 million in measurable direct benefits to the County residents.

Other Findings:

An average SLCoLibrary cardholder saved \$4,581 annually by not having to purchase similar material in the marketplace.

When asked how much they would be willing to pay, the average cardholder specified \$487.96.

There were 608 responses to the user/patron survey. More than 100 questions were asked. The first section addressed inclusion criteria, in person and online visitation purposes, and visitation frequency. The second section contained approximately 60 questions pertaining to current usage and willingness to pay for alternative services as well as questions about satisfaction with library services. The third section collected demographic information for statistical purposes.

The majority of survey respondents were satisfied (24.36%) or very satisfied (71.88%) with library services—a combined satisfaction rate of 96.24%.

Toledo Lucas County, Ohio

Title

Return on Investment Analysis of Toledo Lucas County Public Library, Fleeter & Associates, Columbus, Ohio, April 2016

Goals

The Toledo Lucas County Public Library has a collection of nearly 2.2 million print, video, audio, and digital materials, ranking it as the fifth largest in the State of Ohio. There are nearly 300,000 cardholders from the Lucas County population of approximately 442,000. There is a downtown main library and 18 branch libraries.

Methodologies

Library services were broken into the following categories:

- A. Circulation of Physical Materials--books, periodicals, dvds, and cds
- B. Circulation of Digital Materials--eBooks, downloadable audio books, digital magazines, & streamed movies
- C. Computer & Technology Services--loaning of laptops and tablet devices, patron use of library computers, wireless provision, and computer training
- D. Reference Services--non-circulating books and periodicals, provision of answers to reference questions, and electronic database usage
- E. Other Library Services, Programming and Outreach--meeting room use, children's, young adult, and adult & family programs, bookmobiles, genealogy, job & employment and personal finance workshops,

Values for each service were based on comparative market prices for similar services. For instance, based on information about the cost of computer training in northwest Ohio, a value of \$25 per hour per patron was assigned to the computer training offered by the library. The number of patron hours of training was then multiplied by \$25.

For physical books, this study assigned an average discount of the purchase price of 50%. In other words, the assignment of the net value when a patron borrowed a book assumed that the net value of the use of the book equaled its acquisition cost less a resale value of 50%. The formula for computing the value of books borrowed equaled:

Number of Books Borrowed X (Acquisition Cost– 50% Discount) = Total Economic Benefit of Book Circulation

To calculate the indirect benefit, researchers applied a multiplier of 1.41 instead of performing calculations with a specific economic model. This specific multiplier was selected because it was the "Household Consumption" economic multiplier for Ohio,

as computed by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Unlike all other prior ROI library impact reports, this multiplier was applied quite differently: to multiply to the value of library services and not to multiply library expenditures.

Results

ROI Ratio(s):

When compared to the library's expenditures of \$37.1 million in 2015, the total Return on Investment was determined to be 3.87.

Other Findings:

Values and proportions of values for categories of services were:

Library Service	Estimated Value	Share of Value
Physical Circulation	\$40,949,070	40.30%
Electronic Circulation	\$9,125,812	9.00%
Computer & Technology Services	\$19,770,644	19.40%
Reference Services	\$27,894,521	27.40%
Library Programs & Other Services	\$3,937,933	3.90%

Appendix B: Bibliography and References

- American Library Association. *Library Value Calculator*. http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/advocacyuniversity/toolkit/makingthecase/library_calculator
- American Library Association. *List of Support Staff Positions in Libraries*. <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/careers/paths/listsupportstaff>.
- American Library Association. Public Library Data Surveys. <http://www.ala.org/pla/publications/plds>
- Barr, Catherine Barr & Harbison, Constance, "Book Title Output and Average Prices: 2009-2013," in *Library and Book Trade Almanac* (formerly The Bowker Annual), 2014, 59th Edition, Information Today, Inc.: Medford, NJ., page 473.
- Financial Accounting Standards Board of the Financial Accounting Foundation. 1993, June. *Statement of Financial Accounting Standards No. 116 & 117*.
- Independent Sector. *The Value of Volunteer Time in 2015*. http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time
- Personal correspondence with Kimberly Silk, September 28, 2016, about instructions from Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport for compiling In-Library Materials Use based on "observational counts."
- Personal correspondence with Stacey Malek, September 20, 2016.
- Points of Light. *Volunteer Calculator*. <http://www.pointsoflight.org/tools/volunteercalculator>
- Richardson, Rebecca D., "The State of In-Library Materials Use at the Cresson Public Library: A Case Study," *Current Studies in Librarianship*; Fall2011, Vol. 31 Issue 1.
- Rubin, Richard E., "Measuring the In-house Use of Materials in Public Libraries," *Public Libraries* 25 (1986).
- Spencer, John S. & Dorsey, Luene (1998) Assessing Time Spent on Reference Questions at an Urban University Library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 24(4), pp. 290-294.
- State of Maine, Maine State Library. *Library Value Use Calculator* <http://www.maine.gov/msl/services/calculator.htm>
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission. 2012. *Texas Public Libraries: Economic Benefits and Return on Investment*. University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX. <https://ic2.utexas.edu/tpl/>

Appendix C: Performing Organization and Project Staff

The Bureau of Business Research, IC² Institute, The University of Texas at Austin

The Bureau of Business Research (BBR) was established in 1926 to provide small business owners and policymakers with applied economic research and data to strengthen the state's business environment. Throughout its history, the Bureau and its work has been characterized by objectivity and independence. The IC² Institute was established in 1977 with the vision that science and technology are resources for economic development and enterprise growth. In addition to the BBR, the Institute oversees several programs that include the Austin Technology Incubator and the Global Commercialization Group. The Bureau's prolific publications history includes numerous economic assessments and program evaluations.

Project Staff

Dr. James Jarrett, Senior Research Scientist, Bureau of Business Research, IC² Institute, The University of Texas at Austin, served as the principal investigator. Brian Lewandowski, Associate Director, Business Research Division, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder, performed the economic modelling. The research was conducted in calendar year 2016.



The Value of California's Public Libraries

August 2021

1,130 Libraries

23.4 Million Library Cards

113.7 Million Virtual Visits

435,000 Public Programs

10.6 Million Program Attendance

24.2 Million Uses of Public Internet Computers

119 Million Total Collection Items

35.5 Million E-Books

24,000 Public Internet Computers

California's public libraries are visited over **138 Million** times per year with a cost of just \$12 per visit¹

TEN REASONS TO VALUE LIBRARIES

1. Public libraries are community hubs that bring people together and close the opportunity gap by connecting people to essential services and resources.
2. Libraries build and support communities of lifelong learners and help Californians enjoy the social and economic benefits that learning brings.
3. Public libraries deliver a positive return on the funds invested in them. Every \$1 invested in a library yields between \$2 and \$10, with the most common return being between \$3 and \$6.
4. Libraries are economic engines. They support personal economic development and community development.
5. Books are just the tip of the library iceberg. Through digital labs, makerspaces, career centers and business resources, memory labs, public programs, community partnerships, and online resources, public libraries help communities explore, learn, connect, and have fun beyond their traditional “library” brand.
6. Libraries help individuals and communities stay healthy and well.
7. Public libraries support vulnerable community members, including early learners and families, teens and seniors, veterans, people new to the United States, and people experiencing homelessness or mental illness.
8. Library technology increases digital equity and supports the information needs of a 21st Century society.
9. Library workers are “second responders” in a crisis. Library programs and services build community resilience year-round.
10. Public libraries are free and open to all.



INTRODUCTION

Public libraries are community hubs and community partners, connecting people to essential services and resources and building communities of lifelong learners.

Books are just the tip of the library iceberg. Walk into a California public library and you'll find technology labs, makerspaces, career centers and business resources, memory labs, and tens of thousands of public programs.



Visit your library online and you'll find e-books, databases, and virtual programs and events. Technology in libraries, including high-speed broadband in many cities and counties, supports the information needs of a 21st Century society and increases digital equity in communities.

Library workers are “second responders,” supporting communities during crises like wildfires and earthquakes and helping to build community resilience all year round.

Libraries support our most vulnerable community members, including early learners and families, teens and seniors, veterans, people new to the United States, and people experiencing homelessness or mental illness.

Investing in public libraries also generates a solid financial return on taxpayer dollars. For every dollar invested, between \$2 and \$10 in direct and indirect benefits is created, with the most common return being between \$3 and \$6, studies show.

The services libraries provide align with the values held by Californians. The majority of Californians support the free availability of services that support crisis response and community resilience; education and learning; community connections; and services for veterans, youth, seniors, young families, people experiencing homelessness or mental illness, and new immigrants—all of which California public libraries provide.

Public libraries deliver services and value through a unique combination of resources, people, and space that is not replicated by any other government agency.

During the pandemic, with buildings closed, libraries continued to provide vital services—including literacy tutoring, meals for children, services for job-seekers, trusted information, learning resources and more—through their websites, on the phone, and in person, including curbside pick-up and home deliveries.



Given the resources, support, and opportunities libraries provide for learning and knowledge development, health and wellness, community engagement, and economic development, the vitality of public libraries is even more essential now than ever before.

The Value of California’s Public Libraries is a project of the California State Library. Research was conducted between January 2017 and December 2019. The project team used a bricolage approach—combining available resources to create an individualized and persuasive case—to create a public library value proposition that is grounded in data from a combination of sources, including extensive academic and professional literature, library usage data, survey data, and interviews with and written submissions from stakeholders, as well as direct observations.²

PROJECT TEAM

Natalie Cole, California State Library
Cheryl Stenström, San José State University

Jeremy Abbott
Snowden Becker
Meg DePriest
Rachel Hanson
Jane’a Johnson
Shana Sojoyner

PROJECT ADVISORS

Jayanti Addleman, Hayward Public Library
Chris Brown, Santa Clara County Library District (now Chicago Public Library)
Susan Hildreth, Consultant
Misty Jones, San Diego Public Library
Danis Kreimeier, Napa County Library (ret.)
Michael Lambert, San Francisco Public Library
Lisa Lindsay, Fresno County Public Library
Helen McAlary, City of Ontario
Jody Meza, Orland Public Library and Willows Public Library
Eva Mitnick, Los Angeles Public Library
Michelle Perera, Pasadena Public Library
Michael Perry, Siskiyou County Library
Nancy Schram, Ventura County Library
Sandra Tauler, Camarena Memorial Library (Calexico) (ret.)
Hillary Theyer, Monterey County Free Libraries
Derek Wolfram, Redwood City Public Library
Patty Wong, Santa Clara City Library
Monique Le Conge Ziesenhenné, Palo Alto Public Library (ret.)

PROJECT PARTNER

Black Gold Cooperative Library System

1. Library usage data refers to the 2018–2019 fiscal year. It represents typical library usage before buildings closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data about physical resources refers to the 2019–2020 fiscal year. Data can be found at: https://ca.countingopinions.com/index.php?page_id=3.
2. A description of the study’s methodology and full analysis of its findings can be found in Natalie Cole and Cheryl Stenström (forthcoming), “The Value of California’s Public Libraries,” *Public Library Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1816054>.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

COMMUNITY HUBS

Libraries are the only public spaces where people can find trusted information, community, and connection; borrow books, music, and “things” like laptops, musical instruments, and exercise equipment; access art, culture, sports, games, and technology; and get support for lifelong learning, health and wellness, job seeking and career development—all free of charge.

Library buildings are a source of civic pride. Library spaces and programs bring people together. Library services—including volunteer programs and literacy programs—help people become more engaged with their communities. California’s 54 library bookmobiles¹ take essential services out to the community.

Libraries serve as “bedrocks of civil society ... it’s important that institutions like libraries get the recognition they deserve. ... They are the kinds of places where the public, private, and philanthropic sectors can work together to reach for something higher than the bottom line.”^a

Eric Klinenberg, *Palaces for the People*

Communities are stronger when their members work together. Across the state, public libraries partner with private sector, non-profit, and other government entities to connect people to essential services and information resources, and support new citizens, vulnerable populations, children, teens, job seekers, and entrepreneurs.

BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

- Public libraries are commonly referred to as a “third place”—neither home nor workspace. Third places are *“the informal spaces that are often mainstays in a neighborhood, places where both random and intentional in-person relationships are made.”*²
- The Aspen Institute asserts that the library’s *“physical presence provides an anchor for economic development and neighborhood revitalization, and helps to strengthen social bonds and community identity.”*³
- In 2016, 91 percent of Americans agreed that the closure of their local library would negatively impact their community. Some 66 percent of them felt the impact on their communities would be major. An equal number said closure of their local library would directly impact themselves and their families.⁴



- The meeting spaces and social connections that libraries offer help individual users create stronger communities, especially in rural areas where neighbors aren’t as close together.⁵
- Seventy-three percent of Americans say their local libraries promote a sense of community across different groups, while 65 percent see libraries as gathering places for addressing community challenges.⁶

FOSTERING ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

- Through reading, library users gain empathy for others, strengthen friendships, and increase their understanding of and engagement with social issues.⁷ Book readers are 74 percent more likely to volunteer than non-readers.⁸
- Adults with greater education and literacy levels are more than twice as likely to vote in national elections. Recent immigrants with strong English-language skills are more than twice as likely to become citizens as those with limited proficiency.⁹
- Two of the four most popular volunteer activities nationwide are tutoring and food collection and distribution.¹⁰ Library programs like homework help, California Library Literacy Services, and Lunch at the Library, which provides free meals to children when schools are closed, give communities opportunities for volunteer service.

In Butte County, the library's literacy coach makes about 230 visits a year, delivering family literacy services countywide. Library staff also partner with community organizations like the Gridley Farm Labor Camp to provide library access, conversation practice, and computer services to migrant workers.^b

In Solano County, library staff placed books for boys of color in barbershops. Young boys read the books during their frequent haircuts. Barbers say the books encourage the boys to read and provide reading materials for families who aren't able to visit their local library.^c



The community hub at El Dorado County Library offers classes, groups, and activities for expectant parents and families with children ages 0–18. The hub brings together a team of local community agencies including First 5 El Dorado, and El Dorado County's Early Care and Education Planning Council, Child Abuse Prevention Council, and Health and Human Services Agency.^d

Aitadena Library District, Pasadena Public Library, and Sierra Madre Public Library are at the heart of a local network of early childhood hubs, named Growing Together Pasadena. Well-established community organizations provide coordinated services and support to families. The hubs focus on kindergarten-readiness and offer welcoming spaces, individualized resources and referrals, parenting support, and opportunities for children to grow in key developmental areas.^e

NOTES

1. California State Library. 2021. *Public Library Statistics Portal*. Sacramento, CA: California State Library. https://ca.countingopinions.com/index.php?page_id=3.
2. Cabello, Marcela, and Stuart M. Butler. 2017. "How Public Libraries Help Build Healthy Communities." Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/30/how-public-libraries-help-build-healthy-communities/>.
3. Garmer, Amy K. 2014. *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute. <https://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents/Aspen-LibrariesReport-2017-FINAL.pdf>.
4. Horrigan, John B. 2016. *Libraries 2016: Trends in Visiting Public Libraries Have Steadied, and Many Americans Have High Expectations for What Their Local Libraries Should Offer*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/09/PI_2016.09.09_Libraries-2016_FINAL.pdf.
5. Whitham, Monica M. 2012. "Community Connections: Social Capital and Community Success." *Sociological Forum* 27, no. 2: 441–457. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2012.01325.x>.
6. Horrigan, 2016.
7. Billington, Josie. 2015. *Reading Between the Lines: The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure*. Liverpool: Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society, University of Liverpool. http://www.letterpressproject.co.uk/media/file/The_Benefits_of_Reading_for_Pleasure.pdf.
8. Hill, Kelly. 2013. *The Arts and Individual Well-Being in Canada: Connections between Cultural Activities and Health, Volunteering, Satisfaction with Life, and Other Social Indicators in 2010*. Hamilton, ON: Hill Strategies. https://hillstrategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Arts_well_being2010.pdf.
9. National Commission on Adult Literacy. 2008. *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*. New York: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506605.pdf>.
10. Nonprofits Source. 2020. "The Ultimate List of Charitable Giving Statistics for 2018." Bethesda, MD: Nonprofits Source. <https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>.



- a. Klinenberg, Eric. 2018. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. New York: Crown.
- b. Project results reported by Butte County Library to the California State Library, 2019–2020.
- c. Project results reported by Solano County Library to the California State Library, 2019–2020.
- d. El Dorado County Library. 2021. "Community Hubs at the Library." Placerville, CA: El Dorado County Library. <https://eldoradolibrary.org/community-hubs/>.
- e. Collaborate Pasadena. 2021. "Growing Together Pasadena." Pasadena, CA: Collaborate Pasadena. <https://www.collaboratepasadena.org/growingtogetherpasadena>.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public libraries are one of the most visited destinations for children and families, making them an ideal setting to deliver community, enrichment, and learning opportunities to Californians of all ages.

Families are more likely to visit the library together than engage in any other leisure activity. Libraries were the top cultural destination for all Americans in 2019, outpacing movies, museums, live music, and sporting events across all sectors of the population.¹

Mission Viejo's Kinder Ready! addresses vulnerabilities in school readiness by providing programming focusing on four key areas of early childhood development—social and emotional development, self-care and motor skills, language development, and early learning.^a

Almost every parent—94 percent, in one nationwide survey—says libraries are important for their children. Parents value the library as a safe space that instills a love of reading and books and provides information and resources not available at home.²

FOSTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- Libraries are one of the most important supports for a child's early development. "*In the early years, family engagement is associated with children's positive growth and development, and often sets children and families on a pathway of lifelong learning.*"³ Early learning programs in libraries get families playing, singing, talking, and reading, prepare children for school, and provide support and community for caregivers.
- Greater exposure to books is related to the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills, and these in turn influence a child's reading comprehension level in third grade. Early literacy skills resulting from parental engagement can predict word reading by the end of first grade.⁴



- Young children who are read to regularly have a better understanding of language, larger vocabularies, and higher cognitive skills, regardless of their economic background.⁵

Forty percent of children aged 5 and below in California are in the care of informal caregivers—family members, friends, and neighbors. Stay and Play programs at local libraries provide these informal caregivers with guidance and resources typically only available to licensed childcare providers. Over 800 children and adults took part in the program at just five locations in the first six months.^b

HELPING OLDER CHILDREN SUCCEED

- Homework help and free access to books and resources help children succeed in school. After-school clubs and programs give children safe spaces to spend time with friends and take part in activities. Teen councils help youth develop leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, and other workforce-readiness skills.
- Summer programs provide school-age children with free, fun, and enriching activities during the months they're out of school. They help prevent summer learning loss in children and teens, and help adults model good reading habits for youth.

At the Los Angeles Public Library, Teen Council members suggest purchases for the library, plan library programs, write articles for the teen blog, and can earn community service hours. The library's Teens Leading Change supports library teen councils that work on topics like immigration and citizenship, voting rights and voter registration, net neutrality, and information literacy.^c



SUPPORTING OLDER FAMILY MEMBERS

- Parents of children under 18 are more likely than other adults to visit the library and have a library card. Often, parents and children visit the library as a family, with everyone making use of different programs and services. Parents use a broader range of library services and materials than other adults, and report that their children use the library for everything from research and homework to attending programs and events and socializing with friends.⁶
- Library programs that foster parental engagement have positive, long-term effects on children's readiness for school and educational outcomes.⁷ Adult learning programs that incorporate family literacy activities have also been shown to have positive effects for kids and grown-ups alike.⁸

Public library summer meal programs, like California's Lunch at the Library program, fight food insecurity, childhood obesity, and the effects of hunger on educational attainment and emotional wellbeing for kids. Besides providing free summer meals, Lunch at the Library delivers reading programs, resources, and activities for the whole family. In 2020, libraries provided children and teens with 296,124 summer meals and hundreds of thousands of books, activity kits, and learning and enrichment materials.^d

NOTES

1. McCarthy, Justin. 2020. "In U.S., Library Visits Outpaced Trips to Movies in 2019." Washington, DC: Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/284009/library-visits-outpaced-trips-movies-2019.aspx>.
2. Zickuhr, Kathryn, Lee Rainie, and Kristen Purcell. 2013. *Parents, Children, Libraries, and Reading*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/05/01/parents-children-libraries-and-reading-3/>.
3. Lopez, M. Elena, Margaret Caspe, and Lorette McWilliams. 2016. *Public Libraries: A Vital Space for Family Engagement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.
4. Sénéchal, Monique, and Jo-Anne LeFevre. 2002. "Parental Involvement in the Development of Children's Reading Skills: A Five-Year Longitudinal Study." *Child Development* 73, no. 2: 445–460. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00417>.
5. Raikes, Helen, Barbara Alexander Pan, Gayle Luze, Catherine S. Tamis-LeMonda, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Jill Constantine, Louisa Banks Tarullo, H. Abigail Raikes, and Eileen T. Rodriguez. 2006. "Mother–Child Bookreading in Low-Income Families: Correlates and Outcomes during the First Three Years of Life." *Child Development* 77, no. 4: 924–952. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00911.x>.
6. Zickuhr et al., 2013.
7. Celano, Donna C., and Susan B. Neuman. 2015. "Libraries Emerging as Leaders in Parent Engagement." *Phi Delta Kappan* 96, no. 7: 30–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0031721715579037>.
8. Peyton, Tony. 2007. *Family Literacy in Adult Education: The Federal and State Support Role*. New York: National Commission on Adult Literacy. <http://www.caalusa.org/content/peytonfamlitpaper.pdf>.
- a. Project results reported by Mission Viejo Public Library to the California State Library, 2018–2019.
- b. Guernsey, Lisa, and Sarah Jackson. 2019. "Stay and Play—and Learn—at the Library." *New America Weekly*, October 31. <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/stay-and-playand-learn-at-the-library/>.
- c. Los Angeles Public Library. 2021. "Volunteer." Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Public Library. <https://www.lapl.org/teens/volunteer>.
- d. Lunch at the Library. 2020. "Impact." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://lunchatthelibrary.org/impact/>.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Building a community of lifelong learners—and helping Californians enjoy the social and economic benefits that learning brings—starts with the library.

Public libraries foster fundamental learning and life skills through storytime sessions, art and music, and science-based programs for early learners and their caregivers. They support children and teens with homework help, study spaces, book clubs, and diverse book collections. They help youth develop social-emotional and workforce-readiness skills through afterschool and summer programs.

For adults, the library is a classroom for life. Thousands of adult learners rely on the library as a place to build basic reading and writing skills, explore new technologies, develop health and financial literacy skills,

earn a high school diploma, prepare for college or graduate school, and get job-related training.

Nearly 2,000 adults have a high school diploma through the Career Online High School program available at 66 California public library jurisdictions and 750 branches, and another 1,500 are currently enrolled.^a

Technology labs, makerspaces, citizenship corners, storytime nooks, study rooms, performance spaces, career centers, book collections, bookmobiles, and pop-up libraries keep Californians of all ages learning—in the library and out in the community.

EARLY STARTS HAVE LASTING IMPACTS

- Parents who read to their children regularly from an early age help increase their children's vocabularies, understanding of language, and cognitive skills.¹ Family literacy programs, which are commonly offered in public libraries, support early literacy and reading as a shared household activity, and help to close the school-readiness gap.²
- Access to reading materials—especially the free and varied access that libraries provide—is a key factor in developing and maintaining reading habits. When adults and children choose and read books together, they describe reading as “*an escape valve, a way to envision a different future for themselves.*”³



The South San Francisco Library is hosting “learning pods” that provide a safe, emotionally supportive learning space for 40 students in the most economically disadvantaged communities of the southern Peninsula. At the end of the school day, the pods transform into out-of-school-time learning spaces with a focus on STEAM education.^b

LITERACY AND LEARNING GROW STRONGER, HEALTHIER INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

- Over 15,000 adults received tutoring in reading, writing, and math skills in a California public library during the 2018–2019 fiscal year.⁴ A landmark report from the National Commission on Adult Literacy says that adults with higher literacy skills have higher rates of employment, more access to workplace training, and higher weekly and lifetime incomes. Higher education correlates with lower incarceration rates and better self-reported health.⁵
- Those with higher educational attainment are more likely to break generational cycles of poverty, single parenthood, and emotional or behavioral problems.⁶ By supporting literacy, learning, and access to reliable health information, libraries have a positive impact on the health of their users. Those healthy users, in turn, contribute to stronger, more resilient communities.⁷



Oakland Public Library is delivering art instruction in 20 elementary schools in low-income communities. During the pandemic, the project is providing take-home kits for students, and the art instructor incorporates social-emotional learning into classes to help students manage their stress.⁸

MAKING IT EASY FOR EVERYONE TO LEARN

- Eighty-seven percent of people see the library as a place that creates educational opportunities for people of all ages. Nearly half of all Americans regard the library as having an important role in sparking young people's creativity.⁸
- The Harvard Family Research Project asserts that library programs such as computer literacy, English as a Second Language, and General Educational Development (GED) classes "*contribute to lifelong learning and lead to reductions in stress, real savings in time and money, and the acquisition of important job skills.*"⁹
- With 52 percent of American adults categorized as "relatively hesitant" to trust technology, go online for information, or use digital tools for personal learning,¹⁰ the technology training and resources that libraries deliver provide "*structural, often community-wide, workforce development training and support.*"¹¹

Tulare County Library hires teen interns to help build the library's makerspace and develop and carry out online programming. The project helps teens develop their project planning and public performance skills—both important in an information economy.⁴



NOTES

1. Raikes, Helen, Barbara Alexander Pan, Gayle Luze, Catherine S. Tamis-LeMonda, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Jill Constantine, Louisa Banks Tarullo, H. Abigail Raikes, and Eileen T. Rodriguez. 2006. "Mother–Child Bookreading in Low-Income Families: Correlates and Outcomes during the First Three Years of Life." *Child Development* 77, no. 4: 924–952. <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00911.x>.
 2. Anthony, Jason L., Jeffrey M. Williams, Zhoe Zhang, Susan H. Landry, and Martha J. Dunkelberger. 2014. "Experimental Evaluation of the Value Added by Raising a Reader and Supplemental Parent Training in Shared Reading." *Early Education and Development* 25, no. 4: 493–514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.812484>.
 3. Neuman, Susan B., and Jillian J. Knapczyk. 2020. "Reaching Families Where They Are: Examining an Innovative Book Distribution Program." *Urban Education* 55, no. 4: 542–569. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918770722>.
 4. California Library Literacy Services. 2020. *Report to the Legislature on the California Library Literacy and English Acquisition Services Program of the California State Library: 2018–2019 Fiscal Year*. Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://libraryliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1819-CLLS-report-to-the-legislature.pdf>.
 5. National Commission on Adult Literacy. 2008. *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*. New York: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506605.pdf>.
 6. Serbin, Lisa A., and Jennifer Karp. 2004. "The Intergenerational Transfer of Psychosocial Risk: Mediators of Vulnerability and Resilience." *Annual Review of Psychology* 55: 333–363. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145228>.
 7. Wulff, Katharine, Darrin Donato, and Nicole Lurie. 2015. "What Is Health Resilience and How Can We Build It?" *Annual Review of Public Health* 36: 361–374. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122829>.
 8. Horrigan, John B. 2016. *Libraries 2016: Trends in Visiting Public Libraries Have Steadied, and Many American Have High Expectations for What Their Local Libraries Should Offer*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/09/PI_2016.09.09_Libraries-2016_FINAL.pdf.
 9. Lopez, M. Elena, Margaret Caspe, and Lorette McWilliams. 2016. *Public Libraries: A Vital Space for Family Engagement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. https://archive.globalfrp.org/content/download/4911/128059/file/Public%20Libraries-A%20Vital%20Space%20for%20Family%20Engagement_HFRP%20PLA_%20August-2-2016.pdf.
 10. Horrigan, John B. 2016. *Digital Readiness Gaps: Americans Fall along a Spectrum of Preparedness When It Comes to Using Tech Tools to Pursue Learning Online, and Many Are Not Eager or Ready to Take the Plunge*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/09/PI_2016.09.20_Digital-Readiness-Gaps_FINAL.pdf.
 11. Urban Libraries Council. 2007. *Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Development*. Washington, DC: Urban Libraries Council. https://www.urbanlibraries.org/assets/MakingCitiesStronger_Full_Report.pdf.
- a. Data is current as of December 2020.
 - b. Project results reported by South San Francisco Public Library to the California State Library, 2020–2021.
 - c. Project results reported by Oakland Public Library to the California State Library, 2020–2021.
 - d. Project results reported by Tulare County Library to the California State Library, 2020–2021.
- Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.



ECONOMIC ENGINES

As well as delivering social and cultural benefits for their communities, public libraries are economic engines that deliver a positive return on the funds invested in them.

Public libraries support personal economic development by providing opportunities and support for skills development, job seeking, connections to other social services, and small-business development.¹

Studies show that “for every dollar invested [in public libraries], between two dollars and ten dollars are returned, with the most common return being between three dollars and six dollars.”²

The California State Library used federal CARES Act funding to purchase access to JobNow and VetNow for every California public library. This means jobseekers, veterans, and their families can access free help and resources—including personalized résumé assistance, live online job interview practice, and education, employment, housing, and healthcare resources—through their local library’s website.

Partnerships between libraries and workforce development boards support job seekers and workers and help meet the workforce needs of local employers. Business centers in libraries help entrepreneurs plan and develop small businesses. Veterans’ services connect veterans and their families to federal and state benefits.

Library-centered reading programs help reduce economic inequality, improve financial literacy, and increase individual lifetime earnings. Improved literacy and education can also reduce society’s healthcare and incarceration costs and reduce recidivism among the prison population.³

California’s public libraries are visited over 138 million times per year, with a cost of just \$12 per visit.⁴ No other public institution delivers so much value to so many.

RATING THE RETURN ON INVESTING IN LIBRARIES

- “The National Council for Adult Learning points to annual costs of \$225 billion in nonproductivity in the workforce, crime, and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment tied to low literacy.”⁵ Libraries combat those losses directly through family literacy programs, help for job-seekers, and adult basic skills education.
- Many libraries have adopted the concept of “social-return-on-investment” which attaches dollar values to social impacts that wouldn’t otherwise be counted in financial assessments, such as job creation or improvements in health and wellbeing.⁶ Using this framework, evaluators determined that the Sault Ste. Marie (Ontario, Canada) Public Library returned more than \$4.5 million in value to the community through library lending and other programs, for an average cost benefit of \$603 for every hour the library was open.⁷



- Some \$232 billion in healthcare costs can be linked to low literacy.⁸ In addition to literacy programs, libraries provide other support for Americans to find, read, and understand the information they need to stay healthy. Forty-two percent of internet searches in libraries are for health-related information,⁹ and 59 percent of libraries nationwide provide help with identifying health insurance resources.¹⁰

WORKING FOR EVERYONE

- Libraries provide a wealth of resources for entrepreneurs and business start-ups including access to market data, business planning services, and local business community connections. *“Researchers find that when libraries work with local and state agencies to provide business development data, workshops and research, market entry costs to prospective small businesses are reduced, existing businesses are strengthened, and new enterprises are created.”*¹¹
- During the 2008 economic downturn, over 30 million people looked for jobs on library computers; 3.7 million of them reported that they found work.¹² In fact, *“employment and career purposes”* ranks among the top three uses for library computers and internet service.¹³
- During times of recession, the number of people using the library for jobs- and skills-related resources can go up by 50 percent. In 2012, during the last economic recession, 36 percent of library visitors were there to look or apply for a job.¹⁴ With another recession possible in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries are already reporting increased use of resources for training, job searches, and employment information.¹⁵ For people experiencing unemployment, homelessness, or poverty, the library is a place they trust to provide them with a sense of normality and access to essential resources, without fear of judgment.¹⁶

Santa Barbara Public Library’s SBPL Works! provides one-to-one consultations in English and Spanish. Community members can get help with résumés, cover letters, using the computer, interview practice, and using Employment Development Department resources.²⁰ After a series of natural disasters in 2017 and 2018, the library expanded its program to help the community recover.^a

DRIVING UP CONSUMER SPENDING

- When people spend time at the library, they spend money at nearby businesses. The “halo spending” effect gives restaurants, retail, and services that are close to library branches an estimated 23 percent more in spending from library visitors.¹⁷
- National community reading events promoted by libraries in 2018 resulted in large increases in retail sales for the selected title—over 200 percent for print copies, and over 700 percent for e-books.¹⁸
- Libraries introduce authors and titles to new audiences. A recent study of readers found that younger adults are especially likely to buy books based on their library reading. Among millennials, over 60 percent later bought a book they borrowed, and over 77 percent bought books by the same author.¹⁹

Many libraries demonstrate their value by showing people how much they save each time they check out an item from the library, instead of purchasing it somewhere else. The Ontario City Library in San Bernardino County found that library users saved almost \$10 million by borrowing materials from the library in the 2018–2019 fiscal year alone.^b

NOTES

1. Cole, Natalie, and Cheryl Stenström. Forthcoming. "The Value of California's Public Libraries." *Public Library Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1816054>.
2. Cole and Stenström, forthcoming.
3. Rea, Amy. 2020. "How Serious Is America's Literacy Problem?" *Library Journal*, April 29. <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=How-Serious-Is-Americas-Literacy-Problem>.
4. California State Library. 2020. "California Public Library Statistics." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/statistics/>. [Total operating expenses for all libraries in 2018–2019 (\$1,661,397,681) / total number of visits (138 million).]
5. Rea, 2020.
6. Imholz, Susan, and Jennifer Weil Arns. 2007. "Worth Their Weight: An Assessment of the Evolving Field of Library Evaluation." *Public Library Quarterly* 26, no. 3–4: 31–48. https://doi.org/10.1300/J118v26n03_03.
7. Broad, Gayle, Amanda Parr, and Adela Turda. 2015. *Building Strong and Vibrant Communities: The Value of Sault Ste. Marie's Public Library*. Sault Ste. Marie, ON: NORDIK Institute. http://www.nordikinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SSM-Public-Library_Value-SROI.pdf.
8. Rea, 2020.
9. Horrigan, John B. 2015. *Libraries at the Crossroads: The Public Is Interested in New Services and Thinks Libraries Are Important to Communities*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2015/09/2015-09-15_libraries_FINAL.pdf.
10. Bertot, John Carlo, Brian Real, Jean Lee, Abigail J. McDermott, and Paul T. Jaeger. 2015. *2014 Digital Inclusion Survey: Findings and Results*. College Park, MD: Information Policy & Access Center, University of Maryland, College Park. <https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/2014DigitalInclusionSurveyFinalRelease.pdf>.
11. Urban Libraries Council. 2007. *Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Development*. Washington, DC: Urban Libraries Council. https://www.urbanlibraries.org/assets/MakingCitiesStronger_Full_Report.pdf.
12. Wu, Portia, Johan Uvin, and Susan Hildreth. 2014. "Libraries and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act." Washington, DC: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. <https://sites.ed.gov/octae/2014/11/14/libraries-and-the-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act/>.
13. Becker, Samantha, Michael D. Crandall, Karen E. Fisher, Bo Kinney, Carol Landry, and Anita Rocha. 2010. *Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries*. IMLS-2010-RES-01. Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services. https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/opportunityforall_0.pdf.
14. Horrigan, 2015.
15. Segal, Edward. 2020. "Public Libraries Can Help Companies Survive the Coronavirus Crisis." *Forbes*, November 25. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/edwardsegal/2020/11/25/public-libraries-are-guiding-companies-to-information-they-need-in-the-pandemic/>.
16. Gómez-Hernández, José-Antonio, Manuel Hernández-Pedreño, and Eduardo Romero-Sánchez. 2017. "Social and Digital Empowerment of Vulnerable Library Users of the Murcia Regional Library, Spain." *El Profesional de la Información* 26 (1):20–32. doi:10.3145/epi.2017.ene.03.
17. Arns, Jennifer Weil, Robert Williams, and Karen Miller. 2013. *Assessing the Value of Public Library Services: A Review of the Literature and Meta-Analysis (META)*. Columbia, SC: School of Library and Information Science, University of South Carolina. http://www.libsci.sc.edu/metaweb/ValuingPublicLibraries_FinalReport.pdf.
18. Rea, Amy. 2020. "Reading Through the Ages I Generational Reading Survey." *Library Journal*, January 6. <https://www.libraryjournal.com?detailStory=Reading-Through-the-Ages-Generational-Reading-Survey>.
19. Panorama Project. 2018. "Community Reading Event Impact Report." New York: Panorama Project. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ae8ec5f70e8024a05804e7a/t/5c00229e6d2a73e6ae5478a5/1543512743044/Community+Reading+Event+Impact+Report+v1.pdf>.
20. Santa Barbara Library. N.d. "SBPL Works!" Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Library. https://www.santabarbaraca.gov/gov/depts/lib/events/sbpl_works/sbpl_works!.asp.
- a. Project results reported by Santa Barbara Public Library to the California State Library, 2018–2019.
- b. Saldana, Courtney. 2019. Personal communication, October 3.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

BEYOND BOOKS

Books are just the tip of the library iceberg. Public libraries help communities learn, explore, connect, and have fun, going well beyond their traditional “library” brand.

Public programs explore arts and culture, health and wellness, civics, science, history, and technology. Career centers and business resources help job seekers, entrepreneurs, and the local economy.

Online library users search databases, browse research materials, stream video, and receive reference services and homework help via chat. Robust online access to library resources ensures that users’ essential information needs are served all day, every day.

Digital labs and makerspaces provide access to the latest technology and support learning-by-doing, whether that’s with state-of-the-art equipment or traditional hand tools. “Libraries of Things” make it possible to check out binoculars along with trail maps, or a sewing machine to go with the latest fashion magazine.

Gallery spaces and special exhibitions showcase everything from local artists to seasonal events and regional culture. Local history collections include personal papers, photographs, maps, and documents. Memory labs help communities digitize their collections and preserve their histories.

If you can read it, hear it, watch it, play it, search for it, listen to it, learn with it, or sign up for it, chances are your library offers it!

GIVING THE COMMUNITY WHAT IT WANTS

- Public programs in California libraries typically attract over 10 million attendees a year.¹ They range from hands-on STEAM activities and sports and games to author presentations and community discussions. These programs bring people together and provide them with opportunities for conversation, engagement, learning, and enrichment.
- Summers in California public libraries are about connecting and exploring as well as reading and learning. In San Francisco, Summer Stride events have taken library users all over the map, with free shuttle service to nearby National Parks—plus talks by park rangers, terrarium-building classes, and visits to local farmers’ markets. In Oakland, library staff create opportunities for teens to explore local resources including free museum days, skate parks, and swimming pools. In Burbank, teens have created and hosted a summer murder mystery night. After-hours quiz nights at the San Mateo Public Library have brought adults together, connected them with the library, and helped them get to know their neighbors.²
- Collections, events, and public programs focusing on video games can help draw young people into the library—including reluctant readers, at-risk youth, and the hard-to-reach segment of male teens and young adults—and improve their academic and life skills.³ Librarians with regular gaming events report increased visitorship among younger users,⁴ and in a nationwide survey of 400 librarians, 76 percent report that participants in their gaming events have returned to use non-game resources.⁵



OFFERING ACCESS TO TRUSTED INFORMATION

- Public libraries provide access to trusted information through extensive collections of databases and other resources. When asked who they trust to provide them with news and information, 78 percent of Americans choose librarians and the library. In fact, 40 percent of American adults say they trust libraries and librarians “a lot”—compared with just 18 percent or less for local news, national news, other government sources, or social media.⁶
- A statewide initiative from the California State Library enables public libraries to provide users with free access to the *New York Times*. The subscription provides access to English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese-language versions of the newspaper, and archives going back to 1851. In 2020, the database had 6.5 million page views across the state.⁷

INNOVATING WITH LABS AND MAKERSPACES

- The IDEA Lab in San Diego County’s La Jolla/Riford Library includes a computer lab, 3D printer lab, and what is “quite possibly the first biology lab inside a public library anywhere in the world. It contains everything required for the majority of molecular biology techniques, such as a thermal cycler, gel electrophoresis, and centrifuge.”⁸
- Makerspaces—collaborative workspaces with equipment like laser cutters and 3D printers, sewing machines and woodworking tools—support innovation, provide equitable access to technology and tools, and offer opportunities for people to learn and share at all ages.⁹ Programs like the Tech Petting Zoo at the Mission Viejo Library let kids and teens experiment with circuits, create and print 3D models, and try out virtual technology headsets.¹⁰



- Memory labs preserve personal and local history by helping communities digitize photos, documents, audiovisual recordings, and other formats. The California State Library’s California Revealed initiative helps public libraries and local heritage groups digitize and preserve online access to archival materials that tell the incredible stories of the Golden State.¹²
- Berkeley Public Library’s Tool Lending Library, established in 1979, was one of the first in the nation, and has served as a model for many other public libraries. The collection has expanded over the years, from about 500 objects to more than 3,500. New items like a smartphone-and-tablet repair kit reflect the changing needs of the community.¹³
- The Napa County Library’s “Library of Things” supports lifelong learning and creativity by providing the physical “things” necessary to explore new areas of interest. Users can borrow almost everything, including a sewing machine, button maker, telescope, camera, projector, cookie cutters, board games, musical instruments, binoculars, museum passes, and puzzles.¹⁴

NOTES

1. Counting Opinions. N.d. "Program Attendance, 2018–19." California Public Library Statistics: Ready Reports. Toronto, ON: Counting Opinions. <https://www.countingopinions.com/pireports/report.php?69f1d55157868a636ce6035db53f1d8c&live>.
2. Cole, Natalie, and Virginia A. Walter. 2018. *Transforming Summer Programs at Your Library: Outreach and Outcomes in Action*, 52–56, 82–83. Chicago: American Library Association.
3. Brown, Ron T., and Tamara Kasper. 2013. "The Fusion of Literacy and Games: A Case Study in Assessing the Goals of a Library Video Game Program." *Library Trends* 61, no. 4: 755–778. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/517531/pdf>.
4. Pham, Alex. 2008. "Libraries Score with Video Games." *Los Angeles Times*, April 17. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-apr-17-me-libraries17-story.html>.
5. Nicholson, Scott. 2009. "Go Back to Start: Gathering Baseline Data about Gaming in Libraries." *Library Review* 58, no. 3: 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00242530910942054>.
6. Horrigan, John B. 2018. *Libraries, Trust and Social Capital: Libraries are Highly Trusted Institutions that Cultivate Social Capital in the Communities They Serve*. Washington, DC: Urban Libraries Council. https://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/ULC_White-Papers_LIBRARIES-TRUST-AND-SOCIAL-CAPITAL.pdf#asset:11213.
7. Usage statistics provided by the *New York Times* to the California State Library.
8. Friends of the La Jolla Library. 2021. "Life. Science. Your Library . . . Your Idea Lab." La Jolla, CA: Friends of the La Jolla Library. <https://lajollalibrary.org/your-library/idea-lab/>.
9. Harnett, Elizabeth J. 2016. "Why Make? An Exploration of User-Perceived Benefits of Makerspaces." *Public Libraries Online*, November 28. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2016/11/why-make-an-exploration-of-user-perceived-benefits-of-makerspaces/>.
10. California State Library. N.d. "Pop-Up Makerspace." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/copycat-grants/pop-up-makerspace/>.
11. California State Library. N.d. "Memory Lab." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/copycat-grants/memory-lab/>.
12. California Revealed. 2019. "About." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://californiarevealed.org/about>.
13. Berkeley Public Library. N.d. "Tool Lending Library—a Brief History." Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Public Library. <https://www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org/locations/tool-lending-library/tool-lending-library-brief-history>.
14. Napa County Library. N.d. "Library of Things." Napa, CA: Napa County. <https://www.countyofnapa.org/2619/Library-of-Things>

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Libraries provide nutritious meals to children and families during the summer and connect at-risk patrons with social services and health resources. They support physical health by hosting fitness programs and loaning out exercise equipment.

Libraries reduce loneliness and isolation by engaging community members of all ages in cultural events, discussion groups, and social activities. In doing so, they help build community resilience and combat illnesses like depression and dementia. This helps offset the estimated \$210 billion in annual costs associated with depression in the United States.¹

BOLSTERING PUBLIC HEALTH EFFORTS

- Public vaccination programs reduce the number of severe flu infections by an estimated 40 percent,² and public libraries can play an important role in these programs. The Los Angeles County Library has worked to offer free and low-cost seasonal flu vaccinations in library branches.³
- Almost one in four libraries in the United States have offered some kind of exercise class or outdoor activity programming, such as StoryWalks, Zumba, Yoga, and Tai Chi.⁴
- Public library programs that lend pedometers and other equipment have been shown to increase physical literacy and activity levels among borrowers.⁵ The range of items available for users to borrow from Sacramento Public Library includes a disc golf set, bird watching kit, soccer set and hiking gear.⁶
- Many libraries now employ social workers as part of the library team. A report in *Social Work Today* states that library social work “serves *patron needs through building community networks, crisis intervention, and meeting unmet social services needs where patrons are.*”⁷

Libraries are trusted providers of health information and partners in public health efforts.

IMPROVING MENTAL AND COGNITIVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- A review of 29 studies concluded that following a program of psychologist-directed reading (including the use of self-help books) has positive effects in the treatment of mild depression in adults.⁸
- Libraries and literacy programs can be important partners for clinicians treating depression in their communities, especially where literacy rates are low. In a clinical trial, patients assigned to receive literacy training along with standard depression treatment improved their reading abilities and reported less severe symptoms.⁹
- Greater engagement in reading books, magazines, and newspapers has been correlated with a lower risk of dementia—independent of other factors including overall health, educational level, age, and gender.¹⁰
- Bibliotherapy—using reading materials for help in solving personal problems and psychiatric therapy—helps children heal after trauma, and acquire skills to cope better with feelings of bereavement, anxiety, and loss.¹¹

COMBATING LONELINESS AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

- A survey of over 4,000 adult readers and non-readers found that readers feel closer to their friends and communities than non-readers. They also “*have higher levels of self-esteem and a greater ability to deal with difficult situations.*”¹²
- Seventy-seven percent of Americans live within walking distance or a short ride from a public library. A recent study found that such proximity to neighborhood amenities corresponds with increased levels of social connectedness, satisfaction with their communities, and feelings of safety and trust.¹³



PROVIDING HEALTH INFORMATION AND HEALTH LITERACY

- Literacy directly impacts how much people know about healthy living and how well they care for themselves. Literacy skills increase the percentage of patients who recognize the symptoms and warning signs of serious conditions like diabetes, as well as identify and properly take prescribed medications.¹⁴
- Seventy-three percent of Americans aged 16 and over say libraries contribute to people finding the health information they need. Forty-two percent of Americans who have used the library's computers, internet, or Wi-Fi have done so for health-related searches.¹⁵ Nationwide, 59 percent of libraries provide visitors with help identifying health insurance resources.¹⁶
- Library-sponsored health information courses increase the capacity of older adults to find and understand basic health information and make appropriate health decisions. In one study, 97 percent of those participating in a library-sponsored health information course said they learned “*a lot.*” Seventy-five percent reported that information they learned affected their decision on a health or medically-related issue.¹⁷

Sit and Be Fit, a low-impact exercise program for older adults and adults with disabilities in Fresno County, has inspired a number of copycat programs across the state. In Fresno, the library partnered with Fresno Parks, After School, Recreation, and Community Services and the local Area Agency on Aging to provide exercise programs for seniors and host conversations on senior health and wellness. Azusa, Monterey Park, and Alhambra public libraries are now partnering with local senior centers and adult recreation centers to keep seniors fit in southern California.^a



LUNCH AT THE LIBRARY

California's Lunch at the Library initiative, launched in 2013, has made it easier for libraries to provide free meals to children and teens when the school year ends.

In the summer, children and teens in families with low incomes often struggle to have their basic needs met. They have reduced or limited access to healthy food, safe places to congregate, and learning opportunities. In fact, 13 percent of California families who eat meals at the library report that they don't get lunch anywhere else during the summer.¹⁸ Food insecurity has been linked with cognitive delays in children, as well as with poorer overall health.^{19 20}

During summer 2019, California public libraries served 289,587 summer meals and 39,737 snacks to children and teens, and engaged them and their families in games, sports, and learning and enrichment programs. In 2020, when communities were unable to congregate because of the pandemic, library staff gave out 296,124 grab-and-go meals and over 350,000 free books and activity kits in the summer, and extended their programs into the fall.²¹

Libraries participating in summer meal programs also partner with local food banks and other agencies



to provide meals for adults. They report increased library cards issued and increased participation in summer reading initiatives and programs for adults and children.^{22 23}

Lunch at the Library has been cited as a model for increasing library participation in the USDA Summer Food Service Program in numerous other states, including Ohio, Colorado, Montana, Minnesota, and Texas.²⁴



NOTES

1. Greenberg, Paul E., Andree-Anne Fournier, Tammy Sisitsky, Crystal T. Pike, and Ronald C. Kessler. 2015. "The Economic Burden of Adults with Major Depressive Disorder in the United States (2005 and 2010)." *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 76, no. 2: 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.14m09298>.
2. Rondy, Marc, Nathalie El Omeiri, Mark G. Thompson, Alain Levêque, Alain Moren, and Sheena G. Sullivan. 2017. "Effectiveness of Influenza Vaccines in Preventing Severe Influenza Illness among Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Test-Negative Design Case-Control Studies." *Journal of Infection* 75, no. 5: 381–394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinf.2017.09.010>.
3. Los Angeles County Library. N.d. "Free Flu Shots." Los Angeles, CA: County of Los Angeles. <https://lacountylibrary.org/free-flu-shots/>.
4. Lenstra, Noah. 2017. "Movement-Based Programs in U.S. and Canadian Public Libraries: Evidence of Impacts from an Exploratory Survey." *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 12, no. 4: 214–232. <https://doi.org/10.18438/B8166D>.
5. Weekes, Lisa, and Barbara Longair. 2016. "Physical Literacy in the Library—Lethbridge Public Library—Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada." *International Information & Library Review* 48, no. 2: 152–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2016.1176466>.
6. Sacramento Public Library. 2021. "Library of Things." Sacramento, CA: Sacramento Public Library. <https://www.saclibrary.org/Books-Media/Specialty-Checkouts/Library-of-Things>.
7. Lambert, Christiane Petrin. 2020. "Libraries and Social Workers—Perfect Partners." *Social Work Today* 20, no. 2: 20. <https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/MA20p20.shtml>.
8. Gregory, Robert J., Sally Schwer Canning, Tracy W. Lee, and Joan C. Wise. 2004. "Cognitive Bibliotherapy for Depression: A Meta-Analysis." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 35, no. 3: 275–280. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0735-7028.35.3.275>.
9. Weiss, Barry D., Laurie Francis, Janet H. Senf, Kim Heist, and Rie Hargraves. 2006. "Literacy Education as Treatment for Depression in Patients with Limited Literacy and Depression: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 21, no. 8: 823–828. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1525-1497.2006.00531.x>.
10. Wilson, Robert S., Patricia A. Boyle, Lei Yu, Lisa L. Barnes, Julie A. Schneider, and David A. Bennett. 2013. "Life-span Cognitive Activity, Neuropathologic Burden, and Cognitive Aging." *Neurology* 81, no. 4: 314–321. <https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.0b013e31829c5e8a>.
11. Vries, Dawn De, Zoe Brennan, Melissa Lankin, Rachel Morse, Brandi Rix, and Teresa Beck. 2017. "Healing With Books: A Literature Review of Bibliotherapy Used with Children and Youth Who Have Experienced Trauma." *Therapeutic Recreation Journal* 51, no. 1: 48–74. <https://doi.org/10.18666/TRJ-2017-V51-I1-7652>.
12. Billington, Josie. 2015. *Reading Between the Lines: The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure*. Liverpool: Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society, University of Liverpool. http://www.letterpressproject.co.uk/media/file/The_Benefits_of_Reading_for_Pleasure.pdf.
13. Cox, Daniel A., and Ryan Streeter. 2019. *The Importance of Place: Neighborhood Amenities as a Source of Social Connection and Trust*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute. <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-Importance-of-Place.pdf>.
14. Morrisroe, Joe. 2014. *Literacy Changes Lives 2014: A New Perspective on Health, Employment and Crime*. London: National Literacy Trust. https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2014_09_01_free_research_-_literacy_changes_lives_2014.pdf.
15. Horrigan, John B. 2015. *Libraries at the Crossroads: The Public Is Interested in New Services and Thinks Libraries Are Important to Communities*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2015/09/2015-09-15_libraries_FINAL.pdf.
16. Bertot, John Carlo, Brian Real, Jean Lee, Abigail J. McDermott, and Paul T. Jaeger. 2015. *2014 Digital Inclusion Survey: Findings and Results*. College Park, MD: Information Policy & Access Center, University of Maryland, College Park. <https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/2014DigitalInclusionSurveyFinalRelease.pdf>.
17. Xie, Bo, and Julie M. Bugg. 2009. "Public Library Computer Training for Older Adults to Access High-Quality Internet Health Information." *Library & Information Science Research* 31, no. 3: 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2009.03.004>.

18. Lunch at the Library. 2020. "Impact." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://lunchatthelibrary.org/impact/>.
19. Ke, Janice, and Elizabeth Lee Ford-Jones. 2015. "Food Insecurity and Hunger: A Review of the Effects on Children's Health and Behaviour." *Paediatrics & Child Health* 20, no. 2: 89–91. <https://academic.oup.com/pch/article/20/2/89/2647265>.
20. Center for Hunger-Free Communities. 2009. "Even Very Low Levels of Food Insecurity Found to Harm Children's Health." Philadelphia, PA: Drexel University. <https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/hunger-free-center/research-briefs/chw-lowlevelsoffoodinsecurity.ashx>.



21. Lunch at the Library, 2020.
22. Rubiner, Betsy. 2016. "Bright Spots in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading." *National Civic Review* 105, no. 2: 43–51. http://www.nationalcivicleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Brightspots.16.ncr_.pdf.
23. Cole, Natalie, and Patrice Chamberlain. 2015. "Nourishing Bodies & Minds When School Is Out: California's Public Library Summer Meal Programs." *Public Libraries Online*, June 2. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2015/06/nourishing-bodies-minds-when-school-is-out-californias-public-library-summer-meal-programs/>.
24. Lenstra, Noah, and Christine D'Arpa. 2019. "Food Justice in the Public Library: Information, Resources, and Meals." *International Journal of Information, Diversity, and Inclusion* 3, no. 4: 45–67. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/ijidi/article/download/33010/25412/>.
- a. Project results reported by Alhambra Civic Center Library, Azusa City Library, Fresno County Library, and Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library to the California State Library, 2018–2019 and 2019–2020.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS AND ADDRESSING COMMUNITY NEEDS

As well-established, resource-rich community hubs, libraries are well-suited to supporting vulnerable populations and addressing community needs.

Libraries provide services tailored to early learners and families, teens and seniors, adult learners, veterans, jobseekers, people new to the United States, and people experiencing homelessness or mental illness. High-speed broadband and technology lending programs increase digital equity. California's 54 bookmobiles¹ deliver services to people who face barriers accessing the library.

By helping vulnerable populations, free of charge, libraries are delivering the kinds of services Californians want in their communities. Survey data shows that “91 percent of Californians support the provision of free services for veterans and youth, 87 percent support services for seniors, 85 percent for young families, 83 percent for people experiencing mental illness, 81 percent for individuals experiencing homelessness, and 71 percent for new immigrants.”²

Public libraries in Imperial County have partnered to create spaces and programming for community members with autism. The spaces include floor rockers, bean bags, and cushions, and sensory baskets with shapes, fidgets, lap pads, and therapy balls. The programs include storytimes and sensory exploration stations.³

HELPING CHILDREN, TEENS, AND FAMILIES

Early learning programs keep young children playing, singing, talking, reading, and writing, and prepare them for school. Summer programs provide learning and enrichment opportunities that help combat summer learning loss—and offer free meals for children and teens experiencing food insecurity.



- In a typical year, almost 800,000 Californians—from early learners to adults—take part in public library summer reading programs and over one million attend summer activities at the library.³
- Food insecurity has been linked with cognitive delays in children, as well as with poorer overall health.^{4 5} When school lunch programs stop in the summer, children in food-insecure and low-income households turn to libraries and other organizations for free, healthy meals and learning opportunities.
- With 24,000 internet terminals⁶ and technology lending programs, California public libraries help to bridge the digital divide between those who can and cannot afford private access to the internet. Over 98 percent of public libraries have public internet terminals and free public Wi-Fi.⁷

TEACHING ADULT LEARNERS

Library literacy services help adult learners develop basic reading and writing skills.

- Over 15,000 adults received tutoring in reading, writing, and math skills in a California public library during the 2018–2019 fiscal year.⁸ Adults with greater literacy and more education are more than twice as likely to vote in national elections, while those with strong English-language skills are more than twice as likely to become citizens as those with limited English proficiency.⁹

ASSISTING VETERANS



Veterans Connect programs support veterans and their families and provide veterans with opportunities to serve as library volunteers and ambassadors.

- Only about 19 percent of California's 1.8 million veterans receive their earned benefits from the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. California's Veterans Connect @ the Library program helps veterans and their families navigate the complex systems of federal, state, and local benefits programs, and connects them with healthcare, housing, and job opportunities.¹⁰

SUPPORTING OLDER ADULTS

Programs for seniors—from technology classes to book discussion groups to exercise classes—build social connectedness and cognitive ability and support healthy, happy aging.

- Classes in basic computing skills—offered at 90 percent of libraries—help close the generation gap in digital literacy and internet use.¹¹ Many libraries also offer “Tech Tuesdays” or similar weekly drop-in sessions, where older adults with varied technical needs can get personalized help with e-readers, smartphones, tablets, and other devices, allowing them to stay connected and independent. Other services designed for seniors include the delivery of specially-selected books to residential facilities.¹²



Libraries in San Benito County, Inyo County, El Dorado County, the Inland Empire and other parts of the state are investing in bookmobiles, book lockers, kiosks, and “open plus” technology solutions which allow libraries to be used during unstaffed hours. The Sacramento Public Library has commissioned a new fleet of electric bookmobiles to take library services in to the community. The Santa Maria Public Library’s specially-outfitted library van provides literacy services, library materials, computer access, and programming in places where community members live and gather, including local housing authority developments.^b

OFFERING AID TO PERSONS EXPERIENCING HEALTH CONDITIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

Library workers, including social workers, connect persons experiencing mental health conditions and persons experiencing homelessness with social services and resources.

- Libraries are “mental health hubs” supporting community members with mental health and substance abuse conditions. The San Francisco Public Library was the first in the nation to employ a social worker on staff.¹³ In recent years, hundreds of California library staff have been trained in Mental Health First Aid—learning about the prevalence and symptoms of mental illness as well as de-escalation strategies—through the State Library’s Mental Health Initiative.

- Libraries continue to support vulnerable populations even when their doors are closed. Keeping Wi-Fi networks on 24/7 and boosting service to reach outdoor areas around library buildings keeps users connected.¹⁴ In San Luis Obispo, county officials converted parking lots to safe overnight refuges with bathrooms and showers for those sleeping in their cars during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program began in the Los Osos Library parking lot.¹⁵

WELCOMING IMMIGRANTS

For the millions of Californians born in another country, libraries provide pathways to learning a new language and connections to the communities they call home.

- Roughly 27 percent of California’s population are immigrants—over 10 million individuals.¹⁶ Nationwide, 55 percent of recent immigrants use the library on a daily or weekly basis.¹⁷
- Library resources such as English-language education,¹⁸ civics courses, and programs for job-seekers make it easier for immigrants to integrate into new surroundings.¹⁹ Library programs “serve as a gateway to the workforce by providing access to critical and employment skills.” They “help new Americans overcome the barriers to becoming more engaged members of their communities.”²⁰



Anaheim Public Library’s Welcoming Anaheim: Immigrant and Refugee Integration project provides local immigrants and refugees with access to resources and materials in its Citizenship Corner. Programs feature topics like acclimating to a new community and how to find citizenship information. Community partners provide counseling to help with integration, acclimation, and citizenship.^c

NOTES

1. California State Library. 2021. *Public Library Statistics Portal*. Sacramento, CA: California State Library. https://ca.countingopinions.com/index.php?page_id=3.
2. Williams, Shannon, Kim Nalder, Raluca Buzdugan, and Jessica Newham. 2019. *The Value of Public Libraries: Measuring the Opinions of California Residents*. Sacramento, CA: Institute for Social Research, California State University, Sacramento.
3. California Library Association. 2020. "Impact." Summer @ Your Library: Explore, Learn, Read, Connect. Pasadena, CA: California Library Association. <https://calchallenge.org/impact/>.
4. Ke, Janice, and Elizabeth Lee Ford-Jones. 2015. "Food Insecurity and Hunger: A Review of the Effects on Children's Health and Behaviour." *Paediatrics & Child Health* 20, no. 2: 89–91. <https://academic.oup.com/pch/article/20/2/89/2647265>.
5. Center for Hunger-Free Communities. 2009. "Even Very Low Levels of Food Insecurity Found to Harm Children's Health." Philadelphia, PA: Drexel University. <https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/hunger-free-center/research-briefs/chw-lowlevelsoffoodinsecurity.ashx>.
6. California State Library. 2020. "California Public Library Statistics." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/statistics/>.
7. Bertot, John Carlo, Brian Real, Jean Lee, Abigail J. McDermott, and Paul T. Jaeger. 2015. *2014 Digital Inclusion Survey: Findings and Results*. College Park, MD: Information Policy & Access Center, University of Maryland, College Park. <https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/2014DigitalInclusionSurveyFinalRelease.pdf>.
8. California Library Literacy Services. 2020. *Report to the Legislature on the California Library Literacy and English Acquisition Services Program of the California State Library: 2018–2019 Fiscal Year*. Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://libraryliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1819-CLLS-report-to-the-legislature.pdf>.
9. National Commission on Adult Literacy. 2008. *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*. New York: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506605.pdf>.
10. Wolfe, Barbara. 2018. *Veterans Connect @ the Library: Five Year Evaluation*. Sacramento, CA: California State Library. http://calibrariesforveterans.org/files/Vets_Connect_Eval_2018.pdf.
11. Bertot et al., 2015.
12. Horton, Jalesia. 2019. "Senior Citizens in the Twenty-First-Century Public Library." *Public Library Quarterly* 38, no. 2: 179–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2018.1554176>.
13. Stringer, Heather. 2020. "Libraries as Mental Health Hubs: Across the United States, Libraries are Striving to Offer Visitors Mental Health Supports." *Monitor on Psychology* 51, no. 3: 26. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/libraries-health-hubs>.
14. American Library Association. 2020. "ALA Recommends Libraries Leave Wi-Fi Open During Closures." *American Libraries*, March 23. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/ala-recommends-libraries-leave-wi-fi-open-during-closures/>.
15. Showalter, Rachel. 2020. "SLO County Safe Parking Program Gives Homeless a Place to Sleep." *KSBY6 News*, March 27. Santa Barbara, CA: KSBY. <https://www.ksby.com/news/local-news/slo-county-safe-parking-program-gives-homeless-a-place-to-sleep>.
16. Becerra, Xavier. 2018. *Promoting Safe and Secure Libraries for All: Guidance and Model Policies to Assist California's Public Libraries in Responding to Immigration Issues*. Sacramento, CA: Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice. <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/immigration/libraries.pdf>.
17. Institute of Museum and Library Services. 2012. "Talking Points: Libraries Are Key to Success for New Americans." Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services. <https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/newamericans.pdf>.
18. Kong, Luis. 2011. "Failing to Read Well: The Role of Public Libraries in Adult Literacy, Immigrant Community Building, and Free Access to Learning." In *Adult Education Research Conference: 2011 Conference Proceedings (Toronto, ON, Canada)*, 388–393. Manhattan, KS: New Prairie Press, Kansas State University Libraries. <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2011/papers/57>.
19. Vårheim, Andreas. 2014. "Trust in Libraries and Trust in Most People: Social Capital Creation in the Public Library." *Library Quarterly* 84, no. 3: 258–277. <https://doi.org/10.1086/676487>.
20. Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012.
 - a. Project results reported by Imperial County Library to the California State Library, 2019–2020.
 - b. Project results reported by Santa Maria Public Library to the California State Library, 2019–2020.
 - c. Project reports reported by Anaheim Public Library to the California State Library, 2019–2020.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL EQUITY

As community anchors with high-speed broadband, computer labs, and technology lending and digital learning programs, libraries increase digital equity and support the information needs of a 21st Century society.

Even though most Americans have a cell phone,¹ one in four people use the public computers, broadband, or Wi-Fi during their visit to the public library.² They also borrow laptops, Chromebooks, and hotspots. Many people nationwide, particularly lower-income households and those living in rural areas, still lack home computers and adequate connectivity. They depend on libraries.

Library users check out e-books, access databases, and take part in programs through library websites. Library staff assist virtual visitors through chat, email, and other online reference services. Virtual visits to California libraries almost equaled in-person visits in 2019—113 million online and 138 million in person.³ Once the pandemic hit in 2020, virtual visits became the way most Californians connected with their libraries.

Libraries also offer innovative technology-based services including multimedia labs, augmented reality, coding, and robotics programs, as well as online gaming. Library staff provide personalized tech-help sessions for patrons, setting up their mobile devices for checking out e-books and audiobooks.

Supporting the Information Needs
of a 21st Century Society

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY

- California's State Broadband Action Plan affirms that broadband is "*a critical service, not a luxury*" and its first goal is to ensure that "*all Californians have high-performance broadband available at home, schools, libraries, and businesses.*"⁴
- As of 2019, 12 percent of California households still did not have a broadband internet connection, while a further 10 percent were connected through a smartphone only.⁵ The digital divide impacts communities inequitably. "*Residents in less populated areas have much less access to broadband services ... and the poor, the less-educated, the differently abled, seniors, and people of color also feel the costs of the digital divide.*"⁶
- Libraries play a key role in the state's strategy to expand broadband access. As anchor institutions that provide critical services like access to technology and high-speed broadband, and that are "*leading the way*" in digital skills and literacy training, libraries are essential to delivering "Broadband for All" in California.⁷
- With 24,000 internet terminals statewide,⁸ California public libraries provide free online access for their communities—helping to bridge the digital divide between those who can and cannot afford private access to the internet. Over 98 percent of public libraries have public internet terminals and free public Wi-Fi.⁹
- Eighty percent of California's main and branch libraries (897 locations) are connected or connecting to high-speed broadband through the California Research and Education Network—a high-capacity network with more than 8,000 miles of optical fiber.¹⁰
- Nearly every library has some kind of program to provide basic training in internet and computer use.¹¹ With digital literacy skills named as a top priority for workforce development by the federal government, libraries are essential partners in the nationwide network of job centers.¹²

BEING A 24/7 COMMUNITY RESOURCE

- Library websites welcome virtual visitors around the clock, offering services like chat reference, access to the library catalog for holds and checkouts, and connections to databases and other online resources.
- The number of checkouts of electronic materials by California library users more than doubled between 2014 and 2020, increasing from 20.7 million to 44.5 million.¹³
- Wi-Fi hotspot lending programs, movie streaming and downloads, and after-hours wireless access that extends to outdoor seating areas and parking lots are among the technology innovations that make public libraries “*anchor institutions in smart communities*.”¹⁴ These same offerings enabled libraries to maintain high levels of service to users while buildings were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Tweens who took part in Palo Alto City Library’s Coding with the Robot program, taught the library’s programmable humanoid robot to walk, talk, and dance using coding, robotics, and computational thinking.^c

A digital media lab at Burbank Public Library supports the workforce needs of the entertainment industry. It gives adults opportunities to improve their skills and create prototypes and portfolios, and offers students access to specialized equipment. During summer 2020, lab staff provided teens with a virtual summer camp where they produced a news show capturing stories from the pandemic.^a

In 2019, LA County Library hosted nearly 1.5 million internet sessions on library PCs and over 4 million sessions on library Wi-Fi, demonstrating the high level of use of these resources. Expanding library Wi-Fi range ensures an essential connection to job-seeking resources, educational materials, information, and benefits that the most underserved in these communities lack.”^d

In Humboldt County, the public library, Humboldt State University, and the Chamber of Commerce have partnered to increase access to technology among low-income students, and support lifelong learning, digital literacy, and job seeking. Together, they provide students with Chromebooks and offer digital literacy workshops.^b



NOTES

1. Pew Research Center. 2019. "Mobile Fact Sheet." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/>.
2. Horrigan, John B. 2015. *Libraries at the Crossroads: The Public Is Interested in New Services and Thinks Libraries Are Important to Communities*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2015/09/2015-09-15_libraries_FINAL.pdf.
3. Counting Opinions. N.d. "Summary Report: 2018–19." Toronto, ON: Counting Opinions. <https://www.countingopinions.com/pireports/report.php?b2f208d620414747f0abbd034d539cc3&live>.
4. California Broadband Council. 2020. *Broadband Action Plan 2020: California Broadband for All*. Sacramento, CA: California Broadband Council. <https://broadbandcouncil.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/68/2020/12/BB4All-Action-Plan-Final.pdf>.
5. Berkeley IGS Poll. 2019. *Internet Connectivity and the "Digital Divide" in California—2019: Results from a Statewide Survey Conducted for the California Emerging Technology Fund*. Berkeley, CA: Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley. https://www.cetfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/005_003_002_CETF_2019_002_IGS_Poll_CA_Digital_Divide_ppt.pdf.
6. California Broadband Council, 2020.
7. California Broadband Council, 2020.
8. California State Library. 2020. "California Public Library Statistics." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/statistics/>.
9. Bertot, John Carlo, Brian Real, Jean Lee, Abigail J. McDermott, and Paul T. Jaeger. 2015. *2014 Digital Inclusion Survey: Findings and Results*. College Park, MD: Information Policy & Access Center, University of Maryland, College Park. <https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/2014DigitalInclusionSurveyFinalRelease.pdf>.
10. High-Speed Broadband in California Libraries is an initiative of the California State Library, funded by the State of California. Data is current as of December 2020.
11. Bertot et al., 2015.
12. Wu, Portia, Johan Uvin, and Susan Hildreth. 2014. "Libraries and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act." Washington, DC: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. <https://sites.ed.gov/octae/2014/11/14/libraries-and-the-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act/>.
13. California State Library. 2021. *Public Library Statistics Portal*. Sacramento, CA: California State Library. https://ca.countingopinions.com/index.php?page_id=3.
14. Mersand, Shannon, Mila Gasco-Hernandez, Emmanuel Udoh, and J. Ramon Gil-Garcia. 2019. "Public Libraries as Anchor Institutions in Smart Communities: Current Practices and Future Development." In *Proceedings of the 52nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 3305–3314. Manoa, HI: University of Hawaii at Manoa. <https://doi.org/10.24251/HICSS.2019.399>.



- a. Project results reported by Burbank Public Library to the California State Library, 2019–2020.
- b. Project results reported by Humboldt State University to the California State Library, 2019–2020.
- c. California State Library. N.d. "Robo Dojo (Formerly Coding with the Robot)." Sacramento, CA: California State Library. <https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/copycat-grants/the-journey-begins/>.
- d. Project results reported by Los Angeles County Library to the California State Library, 2020–2021.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

CRISIS RESPONSE AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

California's geography and biodiversity is stunning, but brings with it drought and wildfires, storms and flooding, earthquakes, and seasonal extremes of temperature.

Libraries are categorized as essential services by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.¹ Library workers are "second responders" and "information first responders."² California's public libraries help their communities be better prepared, more responsive, and more resilient when crisis happens.

When community members are displaced from their homes, separated from loved ones, or struggling with other effects of disasters, libraries provide essential resources. Libraries help their communities charge cell phones, connect to Wi-Fi, and access food and water. Public internet terminals connect community members to family, friends, insurance providers, and other agencies.³

Seventy-nine of California's 185 library jurisdictions report providing crisis support to their community during the 2018–2019 fiscal year.^a

RESPONDING TO CRISIS

- Librarians and disaster response agents whose libraries and communities have experienced earthquake, flooding, hurricane, mudslide, tornado, wildfire, and winter storm confirm that libraries enhance community resilience in four key areas: economic development, social capital, information and communication, and community competence, which includes flexibility, creativity, and problem-solving.⁴
- Often, claims for insurance and disaster relief funding can only be filed online and require up-to-date internet browser software. With 24,000 internet terminals, plus equipment like photocopiers and printers, California's public libraries provide essential resources during and after disasters.⁵
- A National Library of Medicine project examined the disaster response efforts of libraries, finding that "*librarians' abilities to evaluate, organize, and disseminate accurate information made them ideal partners for emergency planners and disaster response agencies.*"⁶



- Heat emergencies are increasingly common in California. Between 1998 and 2014, heat emergencies caused more deaths than all other declared disaster events combined.⁷ Public libraries provide a place for people to take shelter, cool off, breathe better-quality air, and drink water. As one Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator said: "*The biggest issue we have is that when we open cooling centers or encourage people to use public air-conditioned places they are very underutilized unless they are places people regularly go to, like the library.*"⁸

CASE STUDY: NAPA COUNTY LIBRARY

Between summer 2014 and fall 2018, Northern California experienced two major natural disasters that tested the Napa County Library's resources and response capacity.

On August 24, 2014, a magnitude 6.0 earthquake caused one death, at least 200 injuries, and an estimated \$1 billion in damage. In the quake's aftermath, county departments used the library as a temporary hub for vital functions, including Child Support Services, the Public Defender, and the District Attorney. Library staff assisted with recovery efforts by working in the Local Assistance Center. County departments relied on the library as a partner and a bridge to hard-to-reach clients for public services.

Before the community could fully recover from the earthquake, wildfires broke out in Napa and Sonoma counties in October 2017. The Tubbs fire ultimately burned for over three weeks across nearly 37,000 acres of Napa, Sonoma, and Lake Counties. Dozens of people were killed and five percent of homes in the area (over 4,600 homes) were destroyed. The relationships, trust, and results gained through partnerships built after the earthquake positioned the library to play an essential role as the wildfires raged. The County Executive Office, as lead in the Emergency Operations Center, tasked the library

with keeping the community informed. Fires took out phone lines, cable, and internet connections for the vast majority of residents, making the library their lifeline for safety, health, and welfare updates. Library staff signed residents up for NIXLE, the text-based emergency notification system used by CalFire and county agencies, and registered residents on the Red Cross-sponsored Safe & Well website, enabling family members to make sure their loved ones were safe. With access to internet and phone service limited, printed copies of maps, hazard notifications, and health alerts were posted on whiteboards in library lobbies.

In later months, when power and internet across the county were shut down for public safety during extreme weather conditions, libraries remained open and online. They experienced a 92 percent increase in door count, with individuals and business owners alike pouring through the doors to use power strips, charging stations, laptops, and printers. Many patrons reported that the library was the first place they thought to go when they needed help; others learned about library services and programs while they waited for an available power outlet.

Danis Kreimeier, Napa County Librarian
(ret.)

NorthNet Library System has created libraryrecovery.org, a resource-rich website to help libraries and their communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.



NOTES

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency. 2020. *Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide: Version 4, Effective June 1, 2020*. Washington, DC: Federal Emergency Management Agency. https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/fema_public-assistance-program-and-policy-guide_v4_6-1-2020.pdf.
2. Stricker, Michele. 2019. "Ports in a Storm: The Role of the Public Library in Times of Crisis." *Collaborative Librarianship* 11, no. 1: 11–16. <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1406&context=collaborativelibrarianship>.
3. Hagar, Chris. 2015. "Public Library Partnerships with Local Agencies to Meet Community Disaster Preparedness and Response Needs." In *Proceedings of the ISCRAM 2015 Conference* (Kristiansand, Norway, May 24–27, 2015). http://idl.iscram.org/files/chrishagar/2015/1276_ChrisHagar2015.pdf.
4. Patin, Beth. 2020. "What Is Essential? Understanding Community Resilience and Public Libraries in the United States during Disasters." *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 57: e269. <https://asistdl.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pra2.269>.
5. Counting Opinions. N.d. "Summary Report: 2018–19." Toronto, ON: Counting Opinions. <https://www.countingopinions.com/pireports/report.php?b2f208d620414747f0abbd034d539cc3&live>.
6. Featherstone, Robin M., Becky J. Lyon, and Angela B. Ruffin. 2008. "Library Roles in Disaster Response: An Oral History Project by the National Library of Medicine." *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 96, no. 4: 343–350. <https://doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.96.4.009>.
7. City of Los Angeles. 2014. "Extreme Heat and Cold Annex." Updated December 2. Los Angeles, CA: City of Los Angeles. <https://www.laparks.org/sites/default/files/info/emergency/heatCold.pdf>.
8. Seville, Aleka, and Nik Steinberg. 2016. California Heat & Health Project. Berkeley, CA: Four Twenty Seven. http://427mt.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/427_CA_HeatHealth_DecisionTool_UserNeedsAssessment-1.pdf.
- a. Counting Opinions. N.d. "Summary Report: 2018–19." Toronto, ON: Counting Opinions. <https://www.countingopinions.com/pireports/report.php?b2f208d620414747f0abbd034d539cc3&live>.

Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorient, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities.

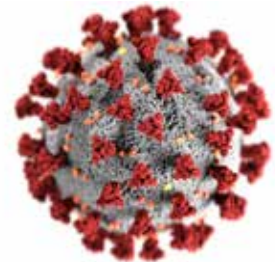
LIBRARIES AND COVID-19

As information providers, community conveners, and partners in education, public health, crisis response, and community recovery efforts, public library staff knew they would be an important part of the response to COVID-19.

Libraries quickly shifted their service models. They expanded virtual services and online resources, made physical items available through curbside pick-up and home delivery, and adapted existing programs like Lunch at the Library to address food insecurity in the wake of school closures.

The majority of libraries report doing even more of what they already do well—building partnerships, providing family-friendly and widely accessible resources, and helping meet the demand for essentials like food, information, and technology.¹

Innovative programs, policies, and partnerships that libraries put in place before and during the pandemic are helping them continue to deliver essential services. The virtual lights are on even when the front doors are closed.



EXPANDING SERVICES

- Library websites already offered free, 24/7 access to many resources—from e-books to streaming video and recorded public events. By April 1, 2020, when 98 percent of libraries surveyed nationwide had closed their doors to the public, 74 percent had expanded their online check-out services, 61 percent had added online programming, and around 40 percent had added to their phone and online reference services.²
- In a nationwide survey, 81 percent of libraries responding said they left their public Wi-Fi network on for after-hours internet access before the pandemic; a further 12 percent added or expanded this service in response to the coronavirus closures. Forty-four percent of libraries also located access points to boost the Wi-Fi signal for easier connecting from parking lots and other nearby spaces. By April 2020, 23 percent of libraries were offering mobile hotspots for checkout.³
- Even small policy changes can have a big impact on library use and users. As branches began to close in 2020, libraries quickly extended loan periods on materials, increased renewal and item-checkout limits, canceled fines and fees, and made it easier to get a library card online to facilitate distance learning.⁴



- At a time when misinformation can be lethal, and many Americans doubt what they read online or in the news, the library's trustworthiness⁵ is more important than ever. People expect libraries to provide accurate, carefully vetted and sourced information, especially in times of crisis.⁶ By April 2020, 74 percent of surveyed libraries were using social media to share up-to-date COVID-19 information, and 62 percent were using it to promote participation in the United States Census.⁷

REDIRECTING RESOURCES TOWARD SUSTAINED SUPPORT

- Many libraries repurposed equipment, supplies, and materials to help with COVID-19 relief, creating masks and shields for healthcare workers and fire departments. Library staff created *“lists and lists of resources for children’s activities; plans for improving adult job skills and dealing with job loss; hobby ideas; reading lists; ways to sleep better, meditate, and stay calm; ways to exercise; and ideas for virtual, social interaction.”*⁸



- Bookdrops in Oakland became collection bins for donated masks.⁹ In San Francisco, the city’s public libraries were converted to childcare centers to assist healthcare workers in the early weeks of the statewide shelter-in-place orders.¹⁰ Library workers helped staff food pantries, made grocery and meal deliveries to those in need, assisted with the city’s communication efforts, and served as contact tracers. Phone and chat reference expertise makes librarians excellent partners for the urgent information needs that arise in emergency service.¹¹

- Hundreds of library staff members in the Los Angeles County library system have served as disaster service workers during the pandemic. While their colleagues continued delivering essential library services, these workers served as contact tracers, and worked with the Homeless Initiative and the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. As one library administrator states, *“We had a lot of people step up for these assignments that were not in their day-to-day job duties, but they did it and did well.”*¹²
- The Corona Public Library is reimagining its outdoor programs to keep kids learning, moving, and connecting with others during the pandemic. Library staff are presenting storytimes with whole-body movement and activities; they’ve created discovery boxes that encourage imagination and exploration; and they’re using hula hoops to support and maintain social distancing.¹³



The El Dorado County Library immediately put its 3-D printers to work creating masks and face shields for healthcare workers. By early April 2020, they had formed a partnership with a local pharmaceutical startup to help produce and distribute thousands of face shields to local medical personnel and frontline workers.^a By October, the library was also partnering with the El Dorado County Registrar of Voters to provide more face shields to poll workers, as well as hosting a voting center and drive-up ballot collection boxes at branches countywide.^b

The library distributes free food, diapers, and other essentials in partnership with the Placer Food Bank, El Dorado Community Foundation, and First 5 El Dorado Commission.^c Library staff also help community members register for vaccine appointments online. Many in the county do not have computers or access to the internet. The library received 200 calls and had dozens of people waiting at the library doors in the first three hours of offering this service.^d

NOTES

1. American Library Association. 2020. *Libraries Respond: COVID-19 Survey: Survey of Response & Activities: Results Collected May 12–18, 2020*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. http://www.ilovelibraries.org/sites/default/files/PLA-MAY-2020-COVID-19-Survey-Results_PDF-Summary-web.pdf.
2. Public Library Association. 2020. *Public Libraries Respond to COVID-19: Survey of Response & Activities: Results Collected March 21 – April 1, 2020*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. http://www.ala.org/pla/sites/ala.org.pla/files/content/advocacy/covid-19/PLA-Libraries-Respond-Survey_Aggregate-Results_FINAL2.pdf.
3. Public Library Association, 2020.
4. Public Library Association, 2020.
5. Horrigan, John B. 2018. *Libraries, Trust and Social Capital: Libraries are Highly Trusted Institutions that Cultivate Social Capital in the Communities They Serve*. Washington, DC: Urban Libraries Council. https://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/ULC_White-Papers_LIBRARIES-TRUST-AND-SOCIAL-CAPITAL.pdf#asset:11213.
6. Stricker, Michele. 2019. "Ports in a Storm: The Role of the Public Library in Times of Crisis." *Collaborative Librarianship* 11, no. 1: 11–16. <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1406&context=collaborativelibrarianship>.
7. Public Library Association, 2020.
8. Fallows, Deborah. 2020. "Public Libraries' Novel Response to a Novel Virus." *The Atlantic*, March 31. <https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2020/03/public-libraries-novel-response-to-a-novel-virus/609058/>.
9. Hammerl, Teresa. 2020. "Where to Donate Masks, Gloves and Supplies for San Francisco & Oakland Hospitals in Need." *Hoodline*, March 25. <https://hoodline.com/2020/03/where-to-donate-masks-gloves-and-supplies-for-san-francisco-hospitals-in-need>.
10. Kelly, Maureen. 2020. "Emergency Child Care Services Being Offered in San Francisco amid Shelter in Place." *KRON4*, March 16. <https://www.kron4.com/news/emergency-child-care-services-being-offered-in-san-francisco-amid-shelter-in-place/>.
11. Ford, Anne. 2020. "Other (Pandemic) Duties as Assigned." *American Libraries*, April 24. <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/other-pandemic-duties-as-assigned/>.
12. Abel, Judy. 2021. "Malibu Librarians Become Emergency Disaster Workers: Library Employees Shift Gears from 'Feeding the Mind' to 'Feeding the Body.'" *Malibu Times*, January 21. http://www.malibutimes.com/news/article_003ae784-5ae4-11eb-95c3-2307feb8f44c.html.
13. Project results reported by Corona Public Library to the California State Library, 2020–2021.
 - a. Shaddox, Rowena. 2020. "Startup Company Works with El Dorado County Library to Get Face Shields to Medical Workers." *Fox40*, April 7. <https://fox40.com/news/local-news/startup-company-works-with-el-dorado-county-library-to-get-face-shields-to-medical-workers/>.
 - b. Orona, Celia. 2020. "State Librarian Takes a Close Look at El Dorado County's Success." *Mountain Democrat*, October 21. <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/prospecting/state-librarian-takes-a-close-look-at-el-dorado-countys-success/>.
 - c. Orona, 2020.
 - d. Brooks, Carolyn. 2021. Personal communication, March 8.



Value of Libraries photo credits: Christian Koszka, Terry Lorant, Becky Ruppel, and the California public libraries that contributed photographs of their programs and activities. CDC photo credit: Alissa Eckert, MSMI, Dan Higgins, MAMS.