

Fact Sheet

The public library is a valuable and popular community resource—in most communities, it is the most visited and used public resource. Did you know there are more library visits per year than movie tickets sold in the U.S.?¹ In fact, American libraries reported 1.4 billion visits.²

More relevant than ever

In addition to traditional services, such as books and children's programs, all libraries offer their communities Internet access and online opportunities, and educational programs such as homework help for teens and financial planning classes for adults. And for many Americans experiencing economic challenges and career needs, the library is more relevant than ever.

Access to information technology

The public library's core mission is to provide free and open access—more and more, that means access to the Internet. Over 70 percent of public libraries—over 80 percent of rural community libraries—report that they are the only source of free public access to computers and the Internet in their communities.³

Library return on investment to the community

Public libraries support both personal and economic development. They can influence job creation and community expansion that supports increased property values and commercial tax revenues, as well as improved quality of life. Studies report that dollars spent on libraries provide solid economic returns to the community.

Usage is up, funding is down

While millions of Americans enjoy the library and understand its vital role for individuals and communities, many people aren't aware of the critical funding issues libraries face. Most library funding comes from local sources and local budgets are decreasing.

Local dollars pay most for libraries

Nationwide, the average per capita operating revenue for public libraries is approximately \$37—of that, over \$31 comes from local sources.⁴

Here's the reality

As Americans look for support during this economic downturn, more and more are turning to local libraries for entertainment, educational opportunities and job searching resources. But while demand increases, most libraries are experiencing shrinking budgets.

- Libraries across the country are cutting hours, staff and even closing locations.
- Most libraries report that they don't have enough Internet access computers to keep up with demand and waiting lines are commonplace.
- Many libraries are understaffed and are unable to provide the support users need to find and utilize resources to improve their lives.

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau

² Source: Institute of Museum and Library Services

³ Source: American Library Association

⁴ Source: Institute of Museum and Library Services