

Public Libraries in the United States Survey

FY 2012

Fast Facts

Highlights of the Public Library Survey, Fiscal Year 2012

For public libraries in the United States, FY 2012 was characterized by stabilization. After post-recession declines in visitation, circulation, revenue and staffing, these measures of public library use and resources remained similar to prior year levels.

- There were 1.5 billion in-person visits to public libraries across the United States, similar to FY 2011 levels. This was a 10-year increase of 20.7 percent.
- Over 2.2 billion materials were circulated in public libraries, similar to FY 2011, and a 10-year increase of 28.0 percent.
- Revenue for public libraries was \$11.5 billion. This was similar to FY 2011 levels, after adjusting for inflation. Revenue has declined after a peak in FY 2009, but is up 7.2 percent over 10 years.
- Public libraries employed 136,851 full-time equivalent staff, with 46,808 librarian FTEs. This was at the same level as FY 2011, following losses after the recession.

Use of library services, such as circulation and visitation, showed an increase immediately following the recession, followed by a decrease back down to pre-recession levels. Even though many measures of public library service have begun to stabilize, there are some measures that have continued to change. Programs and attendance are increasing. Libraries continue to add to their digital holdings, including e-books and downloadable audio and video. Although libraries continue to provide public access computers and Internet access, uses of public access computers are decreasing.

- More than 92.6 million people attended the 4.0 million programs at public libraries. Attendance showed a 1-year increase of 4.1 percent and an 8-year increase of 37.6 percent.
- There were 271,146 public access computers in public libraries, representing a 1-year increase of 3.7 percent.
- There were 340.5 million use sessions of public access computers. Although this has declined in recent years, this was similar to FY 2011 levels. This finding is discussed in light of the increase of personal digital devices, such as smartphones.