Caveats for Data Use

State profile data include active libraries that, in FY 2017, met the definition of a public library developed by the Federal and State Cooperative System (FSCS). Libraries that did not meet this definition are excluded.

Data comparisons between states should be made with caution because of differences in reporting periods and adherence to survey definitions. The definitions used by some states in collecting data from their public libraries may not be consistent with the PLS definitions.

The District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands, although not states, are included in these profiles. Special care should be used in comparing data for these profiles to those for states. Caution also should be used in comparing Hawaii's data to those of other states because all public library data in Hawaii are reported under one entity, the Hawaii State Public Library System.

"Number of Public Library Systems," shown under Quick Stats, refers to the number of administrative entities in a state.

"Number of Public Library Branches and Bookmobiles," shown under Quick Stats, refers to the number of public library outlets. An outlet is a public library, such as a central library, branch library, bookmobile, or books-by-mail that is attached to an administrative entity.

"Population Size Served," shown under Quick Stats, as well as the per person, per 1,000 people, per 5,000 people, and per 25,000 people estimates, are based on the total unduplicated population of the legal service areas for each public library in the state that meets the FSCS definition. (For more information, see FY 2017 Data File Documentation.)

"Number of Full-Time Equivalent Librarians," shown under Quick Stats, is a subset of "Number of Full-Time Equivalent Staff" and includes librarians with an ALA-MLS. Numbers shown are rounded FTEs.

The locale code system, developed by the National Center for Education Statistics, classifies a territory into four major categories: urban, suburban, town, and rural. Percentage of outlets by locale may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Other operating expenditures includes all expenditures other than those reported for total staff expenditures and total collection expenditures. This may include expenses such as binding, supplies, repair or replacement of existing furnishings and equipment, and costs of computer hardware and software used to support library operations or to link to external networks, including the Internet.

All financial data are in constant FY 2017 dollars.

Estimates for total collection materials exclude libraries missing data for books, e-books, or downloadable audio or downloadable video materials.