

# **FAST FACTS**

*Recent Statistics from The Library Research Service*

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## **LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

*With over half of their outlets in non-metropolitan areas, public libraries are well-situated to be on-ramps to the Information Superhighway for residents of outlying and rural areas.*

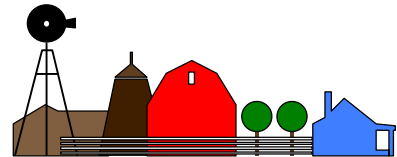
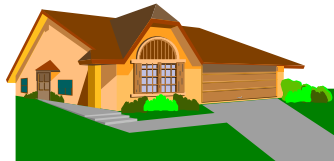
Public libraries can serve as on-ramps to the Information Superhighway--access points to electronically networked information for those who cannot afford --or otherwise easily obtain--a computer with a modem and a subscription to a commercial online service or a non-profit Internet access provider. The nation's public libraries are especially well-situated to play this role in non-metropolitan areas where the availability of computers, access providers, and an adequate telecommunications infrastructure cannot be taken for granted.



How are public libraries distributed among central cities, suburbs, and outlying areas? This question was posed to the LRS by the American Library Association's Office for Research and Statistics on behalf of ALA's new Office of Information Technology Policy. The answer is found in the national public library database produced annually by the Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS) for Public Library Data--a joint venture of the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, the state library agencies, and public libraries nationwide.



The following table reports numbers and percentages of public library outlets (including central libraries, branches, and headquarters of freestanding bookmobile services) by metropolitan status for the state and the nation in FY 1993.



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**Public Library Outlets in the U.S. by Metropolitan Status, FY 1993**

Metropolitan Status	Public Library Outlets, FY 1993			
	Colorado		United States	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Central city	45	18.2%	2,855	17.0%
In metro area, but not central city	72	29.1%	5,138	30.6%
Not in metro area	130	52.6%	8,799	52.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16,792</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS) for Public Library Data

According to these figures, over half of public library outlets in the state and the nation are located in non-metropolitan areas. In outlying cities and towns and rural communities, public libraries are likely to be the only conveniently located, non-commercial locations that are open beyond regular business hours, equipped to access electronic information resources, and staffed by personnel trained to assist the public in using them. And, where non-metropolitan public libraries lack such hours, equipment, and staff, their location combined with their mandate to ensure equal access to information should put them at the top of the list to receive the funding, equipment, and training required to fulfill this important new role.