

Public Library Statistics *How Colorado Ranks*

Citizen Demand Matched at Local, not State Level

In 1997, Colorado ranked in the top half of the states on most public library statistics. Five of the top-ranked statistics clearly demonstrate how popular public libraries are with Coloradans.

- Colorado ranks in the top tier of statistics that demonstrate how much and how often residents use their libraries:
 - 7th in the number of visits per capita
 - 8th in the number of reference questions per capita
 - 11th in the circulation transactions per capita
- Coloradoans back up their enthusiasm with local dollars, as shown by these national rankings:
 - 8th in local income per capita
 - 11th in operating expenditures per capita



However, Colorado does not compare well to the rest of the country in terms of staffing and collection, both expensive resources to maintain and support.

- Colorado ranks in the middle of the 50 states in terms of how well staffed the public libraries are:
 - 18th in staff per 25,000 served
 - 22nd in professional, MLS staff per 25,000 served
- And Colorado ranks surprisingly low on several collection measures such as:
 - 31st in audio and video materials per 1,000 served
 - 32nd in volumes per capita
 - 37th in subscriptions per 1,000 served

CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE
Marcia J. Rodney, Sr. Research Analyst
Library Research Service
201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309
Denver, Colorado 80203-1799
Tel.: 303.866.6900
Fax: 303.866.6940
E-mail: mrodney@earthnet.net

Coloradoans, however, are clearly visiting their libraries, using their libraries, and supporting them with local tax dollars. What they find at their libraries, however, are smaller collections and insufficient professional support to meet the demand. Colorado is one of the few states in which public libraries receive no regular income from state government. In almost every other state, equity of access to public library services is guaranteed by a reliable, annual program of state funding. These statistics suggest that the lack of state funding for public libraries diminishes the quality of library collections and services, no matter how resourceful and capable the available staff is.

Colorado Rankings on Selected Public Library Statistics Compared with Highest and Lowest Ranking States, 1997

Statistic	Colorado value	% difference 1996-97	Rank	Highest Ranking state	Value	Lowest ranking state	Value
Reference questions per capita	1.4	-2.8%	8	NY	1.9	KY	0.4
Local income per capita	\$27.87	7.2%	8	WA	\$32.00	TN	\$6.30
Total operating expenditures per capita	\$26.88	-4.0%	11	OH	\$39.62	TN	\$7.15
Circulation per capita	9	4.2%	11	OH	13	TN	3
FTE staff per 25,000 served	12	-5.7%	18	OH	20	TN	6
MLS librarians per 25,000 served	3	2.3%	22	MD	5	TN	1
Visits per capita	5	-0.6%	7	IN	6	MD	1
Volumes per capita	3	0.8%	32	MA	5	TN	1
Video materials per 1000 served	46	N/A	29	OH	143	AR	14
Audio materials per 1000 served	77	22.0%	29	OH	243	TN	28
Subscriptions per 1000 served	5	2.7%	37	WY	30	TN	2