

COUNTY LIBRARIES WITH DEDICATED MILL LEVIES FUNDED TO OUT-PERFORM COUNTY LIBRARIES WITHOUT MILL LEVIES. 2003

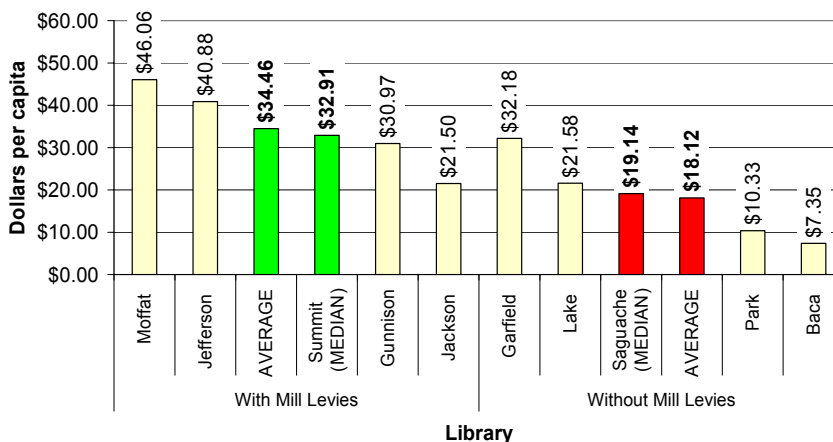
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One of the distinguishing characteristics of Colorado's library districts is their fiscal autonomy. They receive their operating revenues from dedicated mill levies on which the electorate votes directly. Such economic independence is not unique to library districts; half of the state's county libraries for which data are available also have dedicated mill levies. The other half receive tax revenues at the discretion of county commissioners.

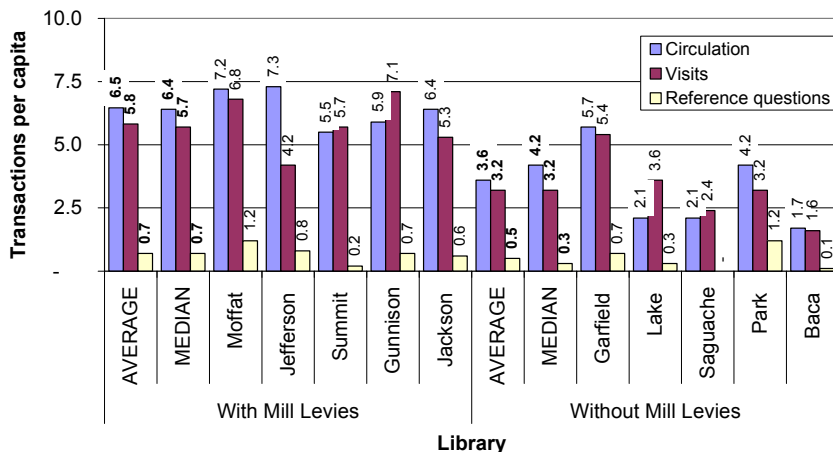
The consequences of this funding mechanism for a county library's local income per capita are dramatic. (See Chart 1.) On a per capita basis, county libraries that are funded by mill levies receive half again as much revenue from their counties. The average and median, respectively, for local income per capita for county libraries with mill levies are \$34.46 and \$32.91, respectively. The median and average, respectively, for county libraries without mill levies are \$19.14 and \$18.12, respectively.

**Chart 1. Local Income Per Capita for
County Libraries With and Without Dedicated
Mill Levies: Colorado, 2003**



It is little surprise that this dramatic difference in funding has consequences for library service output. County libraries with mill levies out-perform their non-mill levy counterparts by 50 to 100 percent on three key per capita service outputs: circulation, visits, and reference questions. (See Chart 2.)

**Chart 2. Selected Per Capita Service Outputs of
County Libraries With and Without Dedicated
Mill Levies: Colorado, 2003**



- For every six items loaned by a mill levy library, only four are loaned by a non-mill levy library.
- For every six times someone visits a mill levy library, there are only three visits to a non-mill levy library.
- For every seven reference questions answered at a mill levy library, only three questions are answered at a non-mill levy library.

Doubtless, if county libraries without mill levies had similar dedicated funding, they, too, could generate per capita outputs comparable to those of their better-funded counterparts.

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