

State's Public Libraries Still Place Colorado in Top 10 But Rankings Slipping After 2002-03 Cuts

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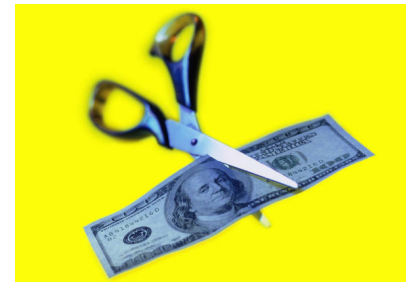
Since 1995, the National Center for Education Statistics has ranked the 50 states and the District of Columbia on selected statistics, usually per capita or another population-based ratio. Since 1998, Colorado has consistently placed in the top 10 states on three per capita measures of public library service output: library visits, circulation, and reference questions.

Notably, however, after “peaking” in 2001 (before the state budget cuts of 2002 and 2003), the state’s rankings on all three indicators for 2003 dropped.

Colorado's 2001 & 2003 Rankings on Selected Measures of Public Library Service Output

Statistic	2001 Ranking	2003 Ranking
Library visits per capita	1 (6.4)	3 (6.4)
Circulation per capita	5 (10.4)	7 (10.1)
Reference transactions per capita	6 (1.4)	9 (1.3)

The demand for excellent public library services is high in Colorado, very largely because of the high educational attainment of its population and the vitality of the state’s economy. But, in 2002 and 2003, state budget cuts eliminated the Colorado Resource Center at Denver Public Library and the State Funding for Libraries grant program. Those cuts were followed by the loss of funding for the seven Regional Library Service Systems and their replacement by a dramatically smaller single organization, the Colorado Library Consortium. As a result of these wholesale cuts and dramatic cutbacks, local public libraries receive less to spend on new books and other materials, less support from the state’s largest public library, and less training and technical assistance to improve their performance.



One has to wonder: how long will Colorado remain one of the top 10 states for public libraries?

SOURCE: LRS.org (the Library Research Service website), Public Libraries, National Statistics, http://www.lrs.org/asp_public/national.asp

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