

Colorado Public Library Performance Rankings (2004 Data)

ED3/110.10/No. 232

March 13, 2006

The mission of a public library is to provide the best service possible to its community. Output measures—which are often per capita statistics—give an individual's perspective on the services libraries provide. The six output measures used here as performance measures are (in no particular order):

- Registration as Percentage of Population
- Library Visits per Capita
- Reference Questions per Capita
- Program Attendance per 1,000 Served
- Circulation per Capita
- Circulation Turnover Rate



Looking at 2004 data on these six measures for five population categories statewide, many public libraries stand out. Twelve of 114 public libraries came to the forefront, one by ranking in the top three in its population group on every measure and the other by ranking in the top three on three or more measures. Among all Colorado public libraries, Arapahoe Library District is the only one that ranked first on all six measures within its population group. Eloise May, director of the Arapahoe Library District, attributes ALD's high rankings to the "strong emphasis on customer service, both in personal assistance [and] in collection development..." Similarly, Cañon City Public Library ranked either first or second on five of the six measures within its population group (10,000-24,999). Director Susan Ooton attributes their high rankings to "an outstanding staff with a strong customer service commitment." Focusing on customer service was a big priority for those directors whose libraries did well on these performance measures.

Registration as Percentage of Population

Registration as a percentage of population is a measure that was particularly remarkable because many public libraries had percentages above 100%. The high percentages can be explained by an extraordinary number of patrons receiving cards who live outside of the legal service areas of these libraries. However, an issue arises when certain patrons—usually those who have no home library—use the library and its services, but don't support the library, or any library, with their taxes. Libraries tend to give cards to any Colorado resident because the presumption is that the home library of that person will reciprocate and give a patron outside their legal service area (LSA) a card. This is the premise of Colorado Libraries Collaborate! (formerly the Colorado Library Card, or CLC) program.

Cortez Public Library stands out because it is not only ranked first in its population group (5,000-9,999), but also has the second highest registration percentage (222%) of all public libraries in Colorado (Nucla Public Library has the highest with 247%). Director Joanie Howland explained that the library's legal service area is designated as the City of Cortez, which has a population of 8,000, however, the county's population is about 25,000. She also reported that about 8,000 of Cortez Public's non-resident patrons live outside of the Dolores and Mancos Library Districts and outside of Cortez, though within Montezuma County. Cortez Public Library is serving many people who live in areas for which no library funding is given by local or county governments.



Library Visits per Capita

Library Visits per Capita is a meaningful statistic because public library buildings—including the collections, technology, and programming they house—are an essential resource to their communities.



Loveland Public Library's director, Ted Schmidt, attributes its high ranking on Visits per Capita to two factors: 1) the amount of time it is open during the week, 64 hours (Sunday through Saturday) and 2) "giving a reason to visit which is equal parts collection and programs- over 600 offered by library staff and Friends group per year."

Liz Abbott, director of Boulder Public Library, says "Both Library Visits per Capita (#1 in group) and Registration as a Percentage of Population reflect long-standing community values around the importance of information and the need for a community gathering place to discuss topics that range from current affairs, to the arts, to books, to English as a second language, etc." Similarly, director Sandra Hackbarth says, "The La Veta Public Library staff are invariably cheerful; we try to greet each person who walks in the door with a smile. I'd say this is a big part of our burgeoning "visits" numbers. We listen hard to our public, with the goal of learning what each person needs from us."

Anne Mojo, director of Louisville Public Library, attributes her library's high rankings on Library Visits Per Capita to its well-educated patrons. "Educational attainment is high in Louisville. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, of the population group age 25 and over, 96.3% of Louisville's residents have a high school education or higher, 59.9% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 22.3% hold a graduate or professional degree."

Reference Questions per Capita

Cañon City Public Library, which consistently ranked in the top two on most of the measures, likely achieved its first-place ranking on the reference questions per capita as a result of changing the location of the reference desk. Susan Ooton, Cañon City director, says that moving the ready reference area to the front of the library was the key to a successful reference area because "most of the questions come to the first person people see, and...I wanted the most qualified people to field those questions."

Program Attendance per 1,000 Served

Program attendance can be an important measure of a library's performance because programs can attract a large number of people and generate higher numbers on other measures of library usage. Staff at La Veta Public Library have "developed a wide range of programming that seems to attract many of the people who don't come to the library for any other reason."

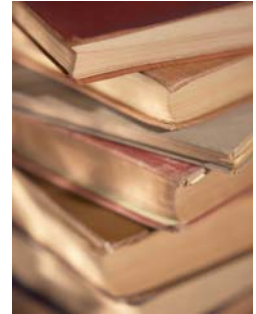


Circulation per Capita and Circulation Turnover Rate

Those libraries that did well on the circulation measures usually credited consistent weeding of the library's collection and emphasized the importance of keeping materials updated. Often weeding is a necessity because of spacing issues. At Loveland Public Library, the entire collection is weeded once every two years and the staff is "ruthless" in their weeding. Director Ted Schmidt believes his library's high ranking on Circulation per Capita reflects a mixture of recent materials with the "depth/breadth of the collection and availability—multiple copies available when people want to come in to get them." Sandra Hackbarth of La Veta Public Library also says about Circulation per Capita, "People have learned that we either have the materials they want, or we will happily acquire them. Interlibrary loans are crucial to this aspect of our service."

Eugene Hainer, Director of the Colorado State Library, has stated that "libraries must position themselves as community assets to achieve support from the communities they serve. Two means of doing that are to be valued by leaders, and to keep customer service as a #1 priority."

Colorado's public libraries are not immune to problems and issues, especially in the current fiscal and political climate; however, it is encouraging to see the focus of libraries is still to provide outstanding service to the residents of Colorado communities.



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	Library	Legal Service Area Population	Registration as Percent of Population		Library Visits per Capita		Reference Questions per Capita		Program Attendance per 1,000 Served		Circulation per Capita		Circulation Turnover Rate	
			RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER
100,000 and Over	ARAPAHOE LIBRARY DISTRICT	199,291	1	111%	1	11.2	1	4.6	1	594	1	21.6	1	7.2
	AURORA PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT	290,782					2	11.8						
	DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY	566,173	3	74%	2	8.7	3	1.7			2	16.2		
	DOUGLAS COUNTY LIBRARIES	225,694							2	428			3	5.7
	FORT COLLINS PUBLIC LIBRARY	125,461	2	88%	3	7.4					3	16.1		
	PIKES PEAK LIBRARY DISTRICT	500,668											2	6.2
	WESTMINSTER PUBLIC LIBRARY	104,522							3	370				
25,000-99,999	BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY	97,763	3	75%	1	10.4			1	546	3	10.8		
	BROOMFIELD/EISENHOWER PUBLIC LIBRARY	43,484					2	2.2					3	3.0
	ENGLEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY	32,410	1	95%										
	LITTLETON/BEMIS PUBLIC LIBRARY	40,422					1	3.0	2	472				
	LONGMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY	79,145			2	9.6					1	13.8	2	3.5
	LOVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY	55,905			3	7.5	3	1.5	3	454	2	11.8	1	4.3
	SECURITY PUBLIC LIBRARY	41,634	2	78%										



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10,000-24,999	CAÑON CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY	15,661	2	127%	1	14.4	1	3.2			2	14.4	2	3.2
	FORT MORTGAN PUBLIC LIBRARY	15,168							3	429				
	LAFAYETTE PUBLIC LIBRARY	23,506									3	13.7		
	LAMAR PUBLIC LIBRARY	13,132	3	113%					2	470				
	LOUISVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY	18,443			2	10.7	2	1.5			1	18.0	1	5.2
	PARK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY	16,120					3	1.2					3	3.2
	RAMPART LIBRARY DISTRICT/WOODLAND PARK/FLORISSANT	17,707			3	10.2								
	RIO GRANDE LIBRARY DISTRICT	12,886	1	184%					1	544				
5,000-9,999	CONEJOS COUNTY LIBRARY	8,457	3	101%										
	CORTEZ PUBLIC LIBRARY	8,385	1	222%	1	17.6					1	16.4		
	EAST MORGAN COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT/BRUSH	8,161					1	2.5					3	2.8
	IGNACIO LIBRARY DISTRICT	5,259							1	1,257				
	LA JUNTA/WOODRUFF MEMORIAL LIBRARY	7,384	2	106%	2	14.0	3	1.3				2.0	14.5	
	LAKE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY	7,904							2	821				
	LAS ANIMAS-BENT COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT	5,260							3	671				
	NORTHERN CHAFFEE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT/BUENA VISTA	7,829											2	3.1
	ORDWAY PUBLIC LIBRARY	5,607			3	13.3								
	PINE RIVER PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT/BAYFIELD	6,421									3	13.0	1	4.3
SOUTH CHAFFEE COUNTY REGIONAL LIBRARY DISTRICT/BRUSH	9,061					2	2.0							



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		RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	RANK	NUMBER	
Under 4,999	EAST CHEYENNE COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT	1,604				3	2.7							
	FLEMING COMMUNITY LIBRARY (SCHOOL/PUBLIC)	1,026			2	33.7			3	1,883				
	HOLYOKE/HEGINBOTHAM LIBRARY	2,273									3	18.4	2	2.3
	LA VETA PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT	1,420	3	162%	3	32.0			2	1,949	2	20.7		
	LIMON MEMORIAL LIBRARY	2,158											3	2.3
	NUCLA PUBLIC LIBRARY	737	1	247%										
	PENROSE LIBRARY DISTRICT	4,440											1	2.5
	ROCKY FORD PUBLIC LIBRARY	4,157	2	213%										
	SILVERTON PUBLIC LIBRARY	543			1	53.2	2	7.4	1	3,100	1	62.9		
	WEST CUSTER COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT	3,475					1	10.7						

