



FACT SHEET

The public library is a valuable and popular community resource—in most communities, it is the most visited and used public resource. Did you know that every day approximately 300,000 Americans get job-seeking help at their local library?¹

More relevant than ever

Over the last decade, visits to public libraries have increased by 20%. In 2012, there were 1.5 billion in-person visits to a U.S. public library by 171 million people.² In addition to traditional services, such as books and children's programs, all libraries offer their communities Internet access and online opportunities, and educational programs such as homework help for teens and financial planning classes for adults. And for many Americans experiencing economic challenges and career needs, the library is more relevant than ever.

Access to information technology

The public library's core mission is to provide free and open access—more and more, that means access to the Internet. In 62% of American communities, the public library is the only provider of free public access to computers and the Internet.³

Library return on investment to the community

Public libraries support both personal and economic development. They can influence job creation and community expansion that supports increased property values and commercial tax revenues, as well as improved quality of life. Studies report that dollars spent on libraries provide solid economic returns to the community.

Usage is up, funding is down

While millions of Americans enjoy the library and understand its vital role for individuals and communities, many people aren't aware of the critical funding issues libraries face. Most library funding comes from local sources and local budgets are decreasing.

Local dollars pay most for libraries

Nationwide, the average per capita operating revenue for public libraries is approximately \$39—of that, approximately \$32 comes from local sources. Complex and inconsistent funding models at local, state, and federal levels reinforce this challenge. For example, state funding of public libraries has decreased by 37% over the past ten years.

Here's the reality

As Americans look for support during this economic downturn, more and more are turning to local libraries for entertainment, educational opportunities and job searching resources. But while demand increases, most libraries are experiencing shrinking budgets. Since 2008, the library workforce has decreased by 6% (to 136,851), leaving fewer staff to respond to an increasing demand for services.⁴

- Libraries across the country are cutting hours, staff and even closing locations.
- Most libraries report that they don't have enough Internet access computers to keep up with demand and waiting lines are commonplace.
- Many libraries are understaffed and are unable to provide the support users need to find and utilize resources to improve their lives.