

Public Libraries as Economic Assets to their Communities

ROI studies have been done in many states, for example...

Florida	<p>McClure, C. R., Robbins, J. B., & Fraser, B. T. (2001). <i>Economic Benefits and Impacts from Public Libraries in the State of Florida</i>: Final Report to Florida Division of Library and Information Services Access. http://dliis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/Research_Office/final-report.pdf</p> <p><i>Taxpayer Return on Investment in Florida Public Libraries: Summary Report</i> (2004). Prepared for the State Library and Archives of Florida through the collaborative efforts of J.-M. Griffiths ; D. W. King, C. Tomer, T. Lynch, J. Harrington. http://dliis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/roi/pdfs/ROISummaryReport.pdf</p>
Hawaii	<p>Ryan, J. & McClure, C. R. (2003). <i>Economic Impact of the Hawaii State Public Library System (HSPLS) on the Business and Tourism Industries Study: Final Report</i>. Honolulu, HI: HSPLS.</p>
Illinois	<p>Walzer, N., Stott, K., and Sutton, L. (2000). <i>Managing Illinois Libraries: Providing Services Customers Value</i>. Macomb: IIRA. [IIRA Reports-5/1/2000] http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/83/ed.pdf</p>
Maryland	<p><i>Maryland Public Library Survey: Customer Survey of Maryland Residents about Libraries</i> (2004.) FINAL REPORT. Potomac Inc. for The Southern Maryland Regional Library and Division of Library Development and Services/Maryland State Department of Education. http://www.maplaonline.org/dlds/adobe/survey03.pdf</p>
Pennsylvania	<p>McClure, C. R. & Bertot, J. C.. (1998). <i>Public Library Use in Pennsylvania: Identifying Uses, Benefits, and Impacts - Final Report</i>. http://www.ii.fsu.edu/~cmclure/pasectionlinks.html</p> <p><i>Economic Impact Study - Regional Benefits of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh</i>. (2006). Examines both the library's value to the economy in terms of return on investment as well as its contributions to people and their communities. http://www.clpgh.org/about/economicimpact/CLPCommunityImpactFinalReport.pdf</p>
South Carolina	<p><i>The Economic Impact of Public Libraries on South Carolina</i>. (2005) D. D. Barron, R. V. Williams, S. Bajjaly, J. Arns, S. Wilson, The School of Library and Information Science, University of South Carolina. http://www.libsci.sc.edu/SCEIS/exsummary.pdf</p>
Texas	<p><i>Texas Voter Survey on Libraries</i>. (2009). http://www.txla.org/html/pr/survey.html</p>
Washington	<p><i>The Seattle Public Library Central Library: Economic Benefits Assessment</i>. (2005). The Transformative Power of a Library to Redefine Learning, Community, and Economic Development. http://www.berkandassociates.com/spl.html.</p>
Wisconsin	<p><i>The Economic Contribution of Wisconsin Public Libraries to the Economy of Wisconsin</i>. (2008). Northstar Economics, Inc. http://www.northstareconomics.com/LibraryImpactStudyFINAL.pdf</p>

Methods for Measuring Value (sample)

- Household telephone surveys
- In-library surveys of visitors
- Surveys of organizations (e.g., businesses, schools, colleges and hospitals) that use public libraries
- State library statistics
- Economic modeling, e.g., Estimated market value (identify equivalent costs for similar service offered by others) or Contingent valuation (method used to assess the benefits of non-priced goods and services by examining the implication of not having the product or service).

Findings (sample)

(Note: Most researchers used a conservative approach to estimating returns, and they note that the results therefore represent minimum rather than maximum benefits)

- Return on Investment:
 - Pennsylvania (\$5.50 for every dollar invested in public libraries)
 - Florida (\$6.54 for every dollar invested)
 - South Carolina (\$4.48 for every dollar invested)
- A study showed that nine public library systems in southwestern Ohio create an annual economic impact of nearly four times the amount invested in their operations.
- Public libraries allow users to share knowledge and services at a cost to them as citizens (e.g., the taxes they pay, their transportation costs, cost of time spent); however, all taxpayers benefit from the public libraries through their considerable contribution to education, the economy, tourism, retirement, quality of life and so on.
- Public libraries build a community's capacity for economic activity and resiliency. The shift in the role of public libraries—from passive, recreational-reading and research institutions to active economic development agents—is documented in a study, *Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Development*, (2007).
- Modern public libraries address such pressing issues as literacy, workforce training, small business vitality, and quality of community life.
- Public libraries help communities make the transition from manufacturing and service economies to high-tech and information economies.
- With an array of public computers, Internet access and media products, public libraries are a first point of entry for many new technology users.
- Building new public libraries has revitalized neighborhoods, entire cities.

Did you know?

- 68% of Americans have a library card.***
- 92% of adults believe public libraries will still be needed in the future despite all of the information available on the Internet. **
- Nearly all Americans (96%) agree that because public libraries provide free access to materials and resources, they play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. **
- There are more public libraries than McDonald's—a total of 16,541 including branches.*
- Public libraries are the number one point of online access for people without Internet connections at home, school or work.*
- 98.9% of public libraries offer public access to the Internet.*

*Quotable Facts about America's Libraries, 2007, produced by the American Library Association, www.ala.org/quotablefacts

**2007 study conducted for the American Library Association by KRC Research & Consulting, www.ala.org/ala/ors/reports/2007KRCReport.pdf

***2008 independent study conducted by Harris Interactive

**Trudi Bellardo Hahn, University of Maryland
September 14, 2009**

With appreciation and acknowledgement of material from
Office of Research & Statistics, American Library Association and John Carlo Bertot