

# Library Facts

## Statistics about the role of U.S. libraries today

- There are an estimated 122,611 libraries of all kinds in the United States today.
- There are more public libraries than McDonald's in the U.S. – a total of 16,220, including branches.
- Two out of three Americans own library cards and use them.
- 62% of adults in the U.S. have public library cards.
- 43% of library users are between the ages of 35-54; 35% are 18-34; 22% are over 55.
- 35% are college graduates; 34% have some college education; 31% have a high school diploma or less.
- 35% have children and two-thirds say they take their children to the library.
- 29% have incomes of \$20,000 - \$40,000; 26% have incomes over \$60,000; 20% have incomes of \$40,000 - \$60,000; 14% have incomes of \$20,000 or less.
- 69% of women and 60% of men own a library card.
- More than 6 of 10 adults (66 percent) use a public library at least once a year.
- One in ten visits the library more than 25 times a year.
- 81% of library visitors check out books; 65% consult a librarian; 61% use reference materials; 50% read newspapers and magazines; 32% borrow records, CDS, or videos; 30% use a computer; 17% access the internet.
- For people without Internet access at home or work, public libraries are the number one point of access.
- Libraries have always made information affordable, available, and accessible to all people.
- Americans go to school, public, and academic libraries more than twice as often as they go to the movies.
- Reference librarians in the nation's public and academic libraries answer more than seven million questions weekly. Standing single file, the line of questioners would stretch from Boston to San Francisco.
- 95% of public libraries provide public access to the Internet.
- Despite super bookstores, video stores, health clubs, and home computers vying for attention, Americans continue to use their public libraries in record numbers, according to a 1998 poll conducted by the Gallup Organization.
- Americans check out more than 1.8 billion items from libraries each year, an average of 6.5 items per capita.
- An estimated 37 percent of public library visitors are children.
- Almost half of children ages 3 to 8 visit a library each month.
- Some 86 percent of public libraries offer preschool story hour and other programs for preschool and kindergarten age children.

- More than 80 percent of adults responding to a Gallup Poll believe it is very important that the public library be a “discovery and learning center” for preschool children.
- More than 51 million children, their parents, and caregivers attend library programs each year.
- More children participate in summer reading programs at libraries than play Little League baseball.
- Americans spend more than three times as much on salty snacks as they do on public libraries.
- About 80 percent of funding for the nation's nearly 15, 000 public libraries comes from local taxes. About 20 percent comes from state funding and less than 1 percent from federal dollars.
- Americans check out an average of more than six books a year. They spend \$25.25 a year for the public library – much less than the average cost of one hardcover book.