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2013-2014 COSLA Survey: Overview

Results from the American Library Association's survey of Chief Officers of State Library Agencies

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2013-2014 COSLA Survey: Overview

Public libraries continue to be vital public access points to resources and services to patrons in their community. But public libraries continue to face funding and capacity challenges.

To continue to gauge the currents in the world of public library funding and broadband access, the American Library Association (ALA) reached out to the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA or "Chief Officers") for feedback on levels of state funding for libraries, bandwidth needs, closures and reductions in hours.

This report provides an overview of selected data; full responses are in the summary data tables attached at the end of the report.

Summary

Libraries continue to provide their vital community service despite the cuts of the past five years. There continue to be reductions in hours and flat budgets – but perhaps the constant budget cuts are leveling off for public libraries. That flattening (and some increases) may not recover losses from years of state belt-tightening, highlighted in our trend graph.

Public libraries continue to look for ways to keep pace with broadband needs –few respondents feel that their libraries are prepared to handle the bandwidth loads in the coming years.

Methodology

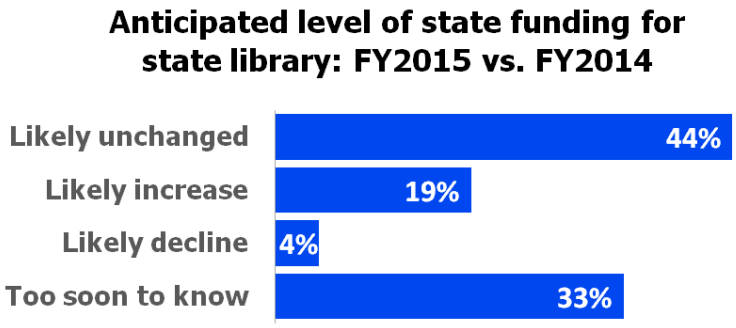
The Chief Officers responded to the ALA's online survey between December 18, 2013 and January 22, 2014. This report highlights changes in support for public library funding on a state level, reductions and closures, outreach/ communications and broadband concerns.

Now as a standalone project to help the Association and librarians better understand the public library funding landscape, this survey continues the yearly survey that was part of the Gates Foundation-funded Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study from 2006 through 2012.

COSLA members are heads of their respective states' library administrative agency and leaders in statewide library development. We thank them for their time and efforts in compiling this information, which will help the ALA advocate for libraries.

The ALA received responses from in 48 of 50 states; the District of Columbia did not respond, nor did Ohio and Virginia.

State Funding for State Libraries



Funding volatility creates challenges for libraries as they struggle to serve their local community with the services they expect from their library.

But after years of declining and flat budgets, COSLA members indicate the funding landscape seems slightly less dire than it has been in previous surveys.

Though funding cuts of the past five years leave libraries struggling to provide the same service with reduced money for salaries, collections and more, state libraries are seeing modestly increased funding from their state governments for FY 2014[1].

The increased funding is a positive study; the degree of funding is less rosy.

Of the 23 states indicating increases, 10 (43%) report gains of 1-2%. Six states report budget increases of greater than 10%.

For libraries reporting decreases – seven in total – the budget changes ranged from 1-2% to the over 10% decrease reported by Kansas.

When asked about funding levels of the next budget, responses were cautious. Most respondents anticipated that their budget for the State Library would remain unchanged or that it was too soon to know the shape of the next year's budget.

Only two states felt that the budgets would decline in FY 2015.

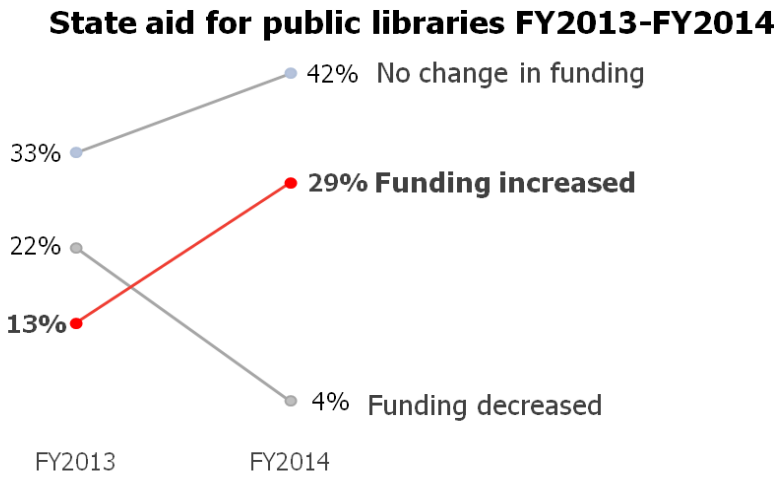
In Kentucky, State Librarian Wayne Onkst responded that "while state funding stabilized this year, funding cuts from the previous 5 years continue to impact service. While state funding remained stable for FY2014, the loss of federal funding negatively impacted service for public libraries in several areas.

"The outlook for state funding in the future is uncertain at best."

[1] Two responding states had not entered the FY 2014 budget year at the time of this collection, and do not have final budgets to base their response on.

Direct Aid for Public Libraries from State Libraries

Public libraries depend on funding from state, federal and local sources, all of which have seen cuts in recent years. But the budget cuts show signs of slowing down.



In FY 2013, 10 of 46 states[2] reported decreases in direct aid to public libraries; this fiscal year, only two reported that direct support would decrease. Forty-two percent (20 states) told the ALA that there was no change in the amount of state funding, and 29% said that funding had increased.

For states with public libraries enjoying increased funding, the majority (11 states/ 79%) indicated that the level of state aid would increase by more than 10%.

Montana's State Librarian commented that "direct aid for libraries quadrupled," and in Colorado, the State Librarian told us that "our state went from $0 state aid for libraries to $2 Million in FY13-14."

On the other side of the equation, two states are experiencing funding decreases – with Louisiana's direct state aid for public libraries "eliminated entirely."

Eleven states have no direct aid to public libraries – not including Louisiana.

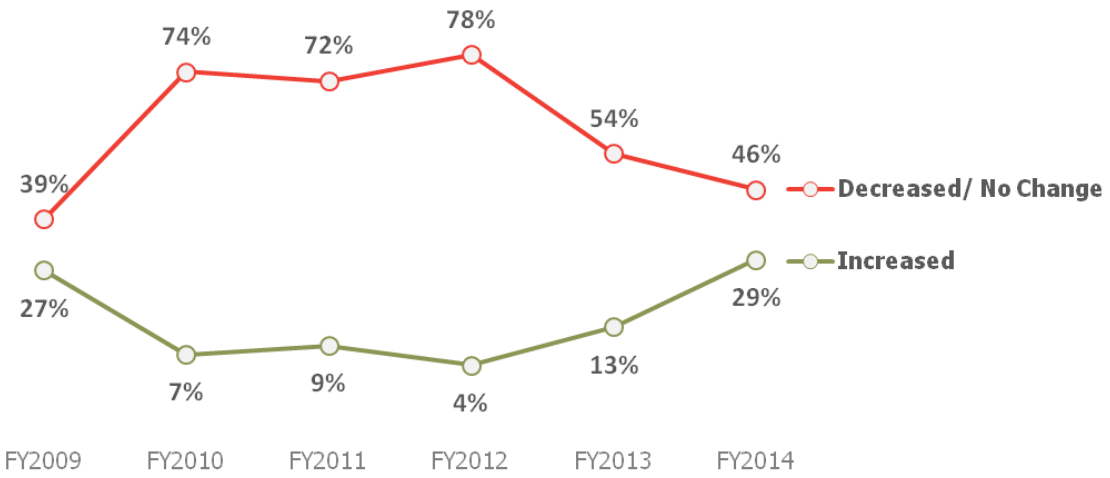
As with state aid for state libraries, most State Librarians felt that funding would remain unchanged or that it was too soon to project the state of direct aid to public libraries.

Most states indicated to the ALA that the state library's ability to support public libraries is unchanged. Compared to FY 2013, four more states indicated that the state has been impacted positively by state budget changes, and two fewer states indicated that the state library had been hindered by budget cuts.

[2] For clarity, the graphic on this page removes results from states that had not finalized their budget when they survey was taken, and also removes states that do not receive direct state aid.

For four years, more than half of reporting libraries told the ALA that the state aid for public libraries was either decreasing or was flat, despite pressures to maintain the same standard of service through the economic downturn and recovery.

Trend: state library aid for public libraries, FY2009-FY2014



This year, many state libraries reported increased aid to public libraries. But even for states where the help from the state agency is showing positive signs, years of reductions and flat budgets leave a deep trough to recover from.

Closures and Reductions in Public Library Hours

Libraries play a crucial role in their communities as a public access meeting space, an access hub for e-government, employment, educational and recreational resources. But libraries cannot serve their communities if the local library is closed.

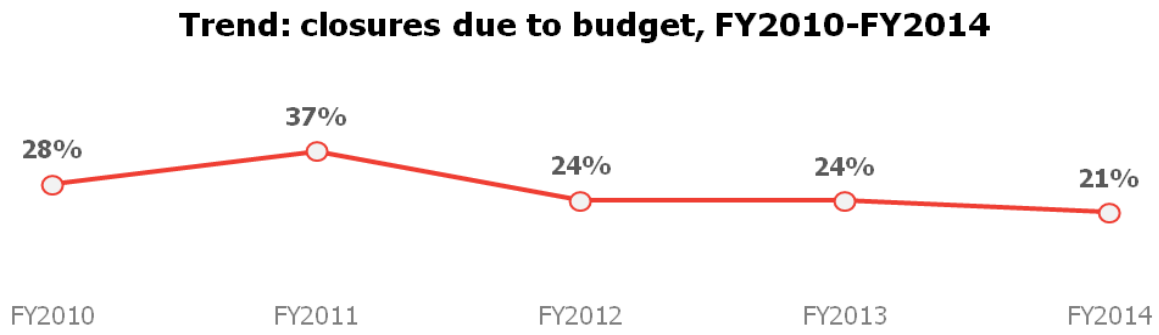
Public Libraries

FY 2014	Library closures	Reduction in hours
Yes	20.8%	45.8%
No	75.0%	37.5%
Not sure	4.2%	16.7%

Similar to last year's report, 10 states reported public library closures – fewer than five libraries in each case. In last year's survey 11 states reported library closures –again, fewer than five libraries in each state.

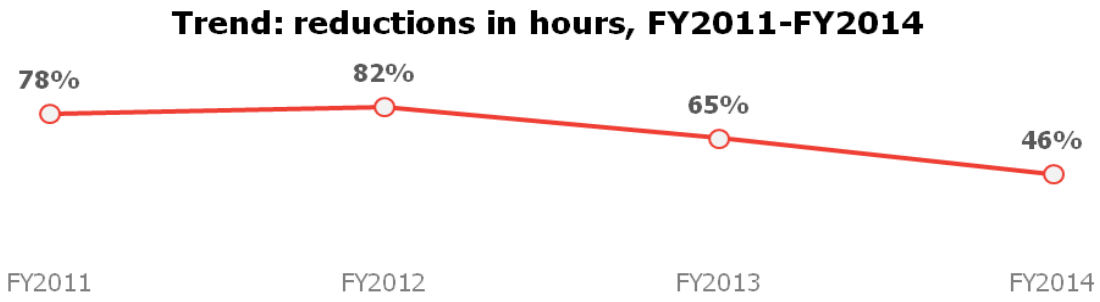
Indiana, Connecticut and Michigan reported closures in both years. Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey and Pennsylvania reported closures in four of the five years from FY 2010 through FY 2014. California, Connecticut, North Carolina, New York and Ohio have reported closures in three of the years.

A total of 33 states have reported closures in the five years that ALA has asked the question.



Twenty-two states were aware of libraries in their state that reduced hours; eight respondents were not sure if any libraries had reduced hours or not. Most of the states had fewer than 10% of their libraries with reductions in hours.

Trend data is positive – at least since FY 2011, the first year the ALA asked the question to COSLA members.

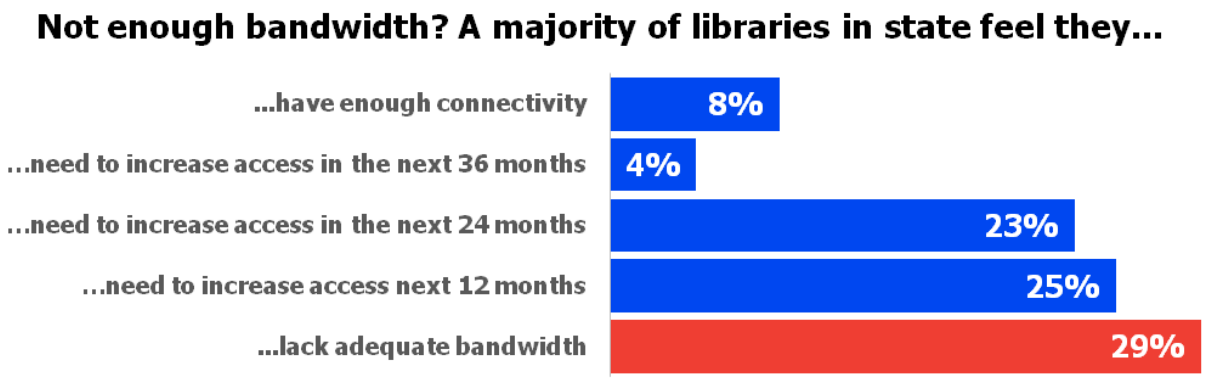


Some respondents indicated that libraries in their state had increased hours, as well; the question was not asked on this survey but will be added to future collections.

Bandwidth needs

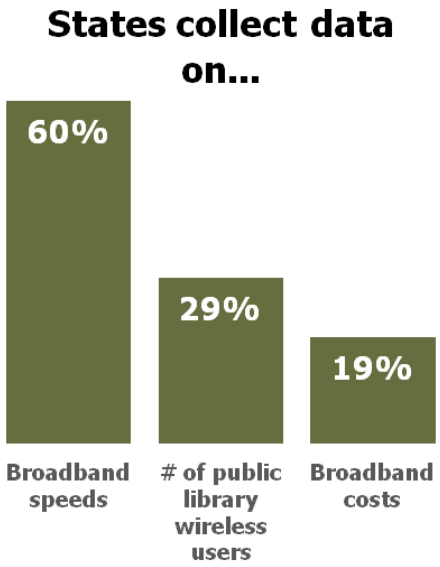
Public libraries serve as a major access point to the online world in their communities; and because libraries provide public access to Internet-enabled services across the United States, libraries in all communities have heavy broadband needs.

There is greater detail to be had on adequacy of connection on the branch level, but we asked state librarians for their overview about how well their states' libraries will be able to meet the needs of their patrons now and in the future.



Though five libraries responded that they did not know/ could not answer the question on bandwidth, more than half of the respondents are concerned about public libraries statewide lacking adequate bandwidth to meet patrons' needs.

On the state level, state librarians collect information on broadband speeds (60% of respondents), number of public library wireless users (29%) and broadband costs (19%) to help gauge their libraries' ability to provide sufficient access to patrons.



NEXT

The ALA continues to study public libraries and the challenges they face providing public access to 21st century service for patrons.

The upcoming Digital Inclusion Study report from the American Library Association and the University of Maryland will add detail to the COSLA findings.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services-funded Study, to be released in June, will provide a deeper explanation of current trends in libraries and broadband needs, services provided by libraries and librarians and how the library continues to provide service as the free access point to information and essential digital resources in American communities.

Appendix: American Library Association
2013-14 COSLA Questionnaire Summary Results

Q1. Please select the statement that best describes the level of state funding for your state library in FY2014, as compared with FY2013.	Response Percent	Response Count
State funding for the state library has increased	47.9%	23
State funding for the state library has decreased	14.6%	7
There was no change between FY2013 and FY2014	33.3%	16
Our state has not yet started FY2014, so the budget is not yet final	4.2%	2
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q2. By what percentage did state funding for the state library increase?	Response Percent	Response Count
1-2%	43.5%	10
3-4%	30.4%	7
5-6%	0.0%	0
7-8%	0.0%	0
9-10%	0.0%	0
Greater than 10%	26.1%	6
	answered question	23
	skipped question	25

Q3. By what percentage did state funding for the state library decrease?	Response Percent	Response Count
1-2%	14.3%	1
3-4%	28.6%	2
5-6%	0.0%	0
7-8%	28.6%	2
9-10%	14.3%	1
Greater than 10%	14.3%	1
	answered question	7
	skipped question	41

Q4. What do you anticipate for state funding for the state library in FY2015 compared with FY2014? [NOTE: States operating on a biennial budget schedule should compare the next budget to the current budget.]	Response Percent	Response Count
State funding for the state library will likely increase	18.8%	9
State funding for the state library will likely decline	4.2%	2
State funding for the state library will likely remain unchanged	43.8%	21
It's too soon to know	33.3%	16
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q5. Please select the statement that best describes the level of direct state aid for public libraries in FY2014 (as compared with FY2013).	Response Percent	Response Count
State aid for public libraries has increased	29.2%	14
State aid for public libraries has decreased	4.2%	2
There was no change between FY2013 and FY2014	41.7%	20
Our state has not yet started FY2014, so the budget is not yet final	2.1%	1
There is no direct state aid to public libraries in my state	22.9%	11
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q6. By what percentage did direct state aid for public libraries increase?	Response Percent	Response Count
1-2%	14.3%	2
3-4%	7.1%	1
5-6%	0.0%	0
7-8%	0.0%	0
9-10%	0.0%	0
Greater than 10%	78.6%	11
	answered question	14
	skipped question	34

Q7. By what percentage did direct state aid for public libraries decrease?	Response Percent	Response Count
1-2%	0.0%	0
3-4%	0.0%	0
5-6%	0.0%	0
7-8%	0.0%	0
9-10%	50.0%	1
Greater than 10%	50.0%	1
	answered question	2
	skipped question	46

Q8. What do you anticipate for direct state aid for public libraries in FY2015 compared with FY2014?	Response Percent	Response Count
State aid for public libraries will likely increase	5.3%	2
State aid for public libraries will likely decline	5.3%	2
State aid for public libraries will likely remain unchanged	55.3%	21
It's too soon to know	34.2%	13
	answered question	38
	skipped question	10

Q9. Have state library programs or staff that support public libraries been impacted (positively or negatively) in FY2014 (e.g. , special funding for training librarians in job-related resources or library development position cut) as a result of changes in state funding for the state library?	Response Percent	Response Count
The state library has been impacted POSITIVELY in its ability to support public libraries within FY2014	22.9%	11
The state library has been impacted NEGATIVELY in its ability to support public libraries within FY2014	18.8%	9
No, there has been no change in state library programs or staffing to support public libraries	56.3%	27
I don't know yet	2.1%	1
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q10. Are you aware of any public library outlets closures in your state in the last 12 months due to budgetary reasons?	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	20.8%	10
Not sure	4.2%	2
No	75.0%	36
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q11. How many public library outlet closures in your state are you aware of?	Response Percent	Response Count
One to five	100.0%	10
Five to 10	0.0%	0
10 to 15	0.0%	0
15 to 20	0.0%	0
More than 20	0.0%	0
Don't know	0.0%	0
	answered question	10
	skipped question	38

Q12. Are you aware of any reduction in public library hours of operation in the last 12 months?	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	45.8%	22
Not sure	16.7%	8
No	37.5%	18
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q13. To the best of your knowledge, what percentage of libraries in your state have reduced operating hours in the last 12 months?	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 10%	77.3%	17
11-25%	13.6%	3
26-50%	0.0%	0
51-75%	0.0%	0
76-100%	0.0%	0
I don't know	9.1%	2
	answered question	22
	skipped question	26

Q14. How would you characterize bandwidth needs of public libraries in your state?	Response Percent	Response Count
A majority of libraries in my state lacks adequate bandwidth to meet current needs today	29.2%	14
A majority of libraries has enough connectivity today but will need to increase access in the next 12 months	25.0%	12
A majority of libraries has enough connectivity today but will need to increase access in the next 24 months	22.9%	11
A majority of libraries has enough connectivity today but will need to increase access in the next 36 months	4.2%	2
A majority of libraries has enough connectivity to meet needs for the foreseeable future	8.3%	4
I don't know	10.4%	5
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q15. Do you collect any of the following data for public libraries in your state on an annual basis?	Response Percent	Response Count
Broadband speeds	90.6%	29
Broadband costs	28.1%	9
Number of public library wireless users (daily/weekly/monthly or similar)	43.8%	14
	answered question	32
	skipped question	16

Q16. For the next e-rate funding year that starts July 1, 2014, do you anticipate a change in the number of requests from your public libraries for Priority 1 e-rate funding?	Response Percent	Response Count
Demand for Priority 1 e-rate funding will likely increase in the next year	29.2%	14
Demand for Priority 1 e-rate funding will likely decrease in the next year	0.0%	0
Demand will likely stay the same	56.3%	27
I don't know	14.6%	7
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q17. For the next e-rate funding year that starts July 1, 2014, do you anticipate a change in the number of requests from your public libraries for Priority 2 e-rate funding?	Response Percent	Response Count
Demand for Priority 2 e-rate funding will likely increase in the next year	16.7%	8
Demand for Priority 2 e-rate funding will likely decrease in the next year	2.1%	1
Demand will likely stay the same	56.3%	27
I don't know	25.0%	12
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q18. Please estimate the percentage of public libraries in your state that requested funding for plain old (voice) telephone service (POTS) in the past e-rate funding year.	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 25%	20.8%	10
Between 26 and 50%	25.0%	12
Between 51 and 75%	8.3%	4
More than 75%	10.4%	5
I don't know	35.4%	17
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0

Q19. In 2013, did the state librarian or anyone on the state library agency staff:	Response Percent	Response Count
Submit comments to a federal agency in response to a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) or other formal call for input (e.g., E-rate reforms)	45.8%	22
Initiate communications with a Member of Congress (or a Member's staff)	79.2%	38
Communicate with the editorial staff of a national newspaper such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today or other major national media outlet (e.g., Time magazine, NPR)	10.4%	5
Participate in any non-library national or international conferences (e.g., ICMA or National Governors Association)	14.6%	7
I don't know	8.3%	4
	answered question	48
	skipped question	0