LIBRARY FACTS & FIGURES

• There are over 139,000 libraries of all kinds in the United States today.

• In the past decade, visits have more than doubled to 1.2 billion per year—with 1.7 billion items borrowed per year.

• Seven out of every ten Americans say they use public libraries.

• Five times more people visit U.S. public libraries each year than attend U.S. professional and college football, baseball and hockey games combined.

• U.S. libraries purchase an estimated $14 billion in goods and services annually.

• For every tax dollar invested in public libraries, there was an average return of more than $4 in benefits to patrons, the community and the economy.

• Libraries employ around 350,000 librarians and other professionals, paraprofessionals, clerical and technical personnel nationwide.

• Since 1965, more than 60 education and library studies have produced clear evidence that school library media programs staffed by qualified library media specialists have a positive impact on student academic achievement.
  • Three statewide studies – in Alaska, Colorado and Pennsylvania – show that a strong library media program helps students learn more and score higher on standardized achievement tests than their peers in library-impoverished schools.

Bridging the Digital Divide

• African Americans and Hispanics are twice as likely to use library computers as Asian Americans and whites.

• In 1996, only 28 percent of public library systems offered public Internet access. Today, thanks to increased resources and the E-Rate, more than 95 percent of library buildings offer public access computing, and 14 million Americans regularly use these computers at no fee.

• Families making less than $15,000 annually are two to three times more likely to rely on library computers than those earning more than $75,000.