

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Office for Research & Statistics (ORS) Update

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Information only.

CONTACT PERSON:

Denise M. Davis, Director, Office for Research & Statistics
312-280-4273
dmdavis@ala.org

DRAFT OF MOTION:

N/A

DATE: March 28, 2008

BACKGROUND:

Update on activities of the Office for Research & Statistics since January, 2008.

Attachments: ORS Report



Update to ALA Committee on Research & Statistics, Midwinter Meeting 2008
Office for Research & Statistics
Denise M. Davis, Director

The following projects were underway since January 2008:

Member Demographic Survey

The American Library Association (ALA) started collecting member demographic information on May 3, 2005 in a voluntary online survey. As of March 26, 2008 more than 25,000 members (about 39%) had responded. The survey is now available for voluntary response when members exit the Dues Manager and has made a distinct difference in response rates.

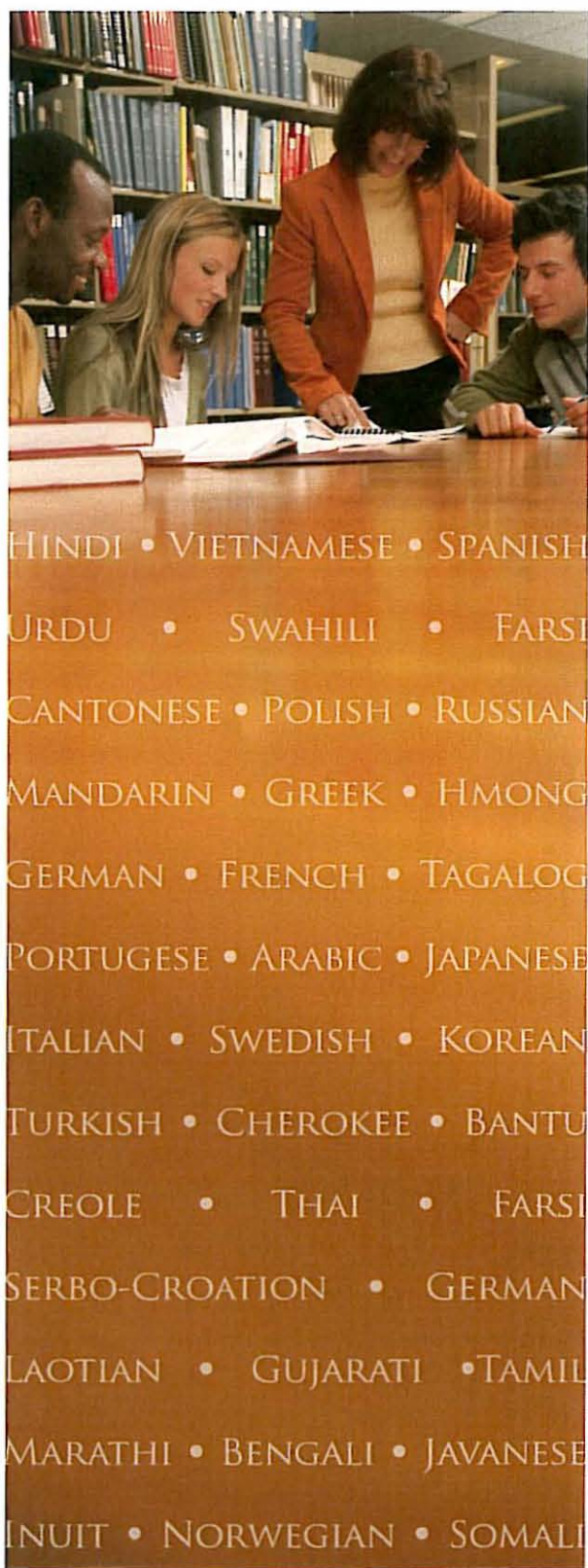
Additional member demographic research will be conducted in response to the recommendations of the Graduated Dues Task Force.

Public Library Funding and Technology Access Studies

The 2007-2008 **Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study** research is complete and the project team is in the writing stage. A program discussing current findings is planned for Annual Conference 2008 in Anaheim. More information about the project and published reports are online at <http://www.ala.org/plinternetfunding> .

Public Library Service to the Nation's Linguistically Isolated

Funded by the World Book Goal Grant Award, ORS is working in partnership with the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS), the Office for Diversity (OFD), and the Public Programs Office (PPO) to collect information about public library services to non-English speakers. The report was released during the 2008 PLA Conference in Minneapolis. Information about the project is located on the OLOS website, <http://www.ala.org/ala/olos/nonenglishspeakers>. Key findings are attached.



SERVING NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN U.S. PUBLIC LIBRARIES

2007 ANALYSIS OF LIBRARY
DEMOGRAPHICS, SERVICES
AND PROGRAMS

ALA American
Library
Association



OFFICE FOR
RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

A Report by the ALA Office for Research and Statistics

Office for Literacy and Outreach Services

Office for Diversity

Public Programs Office

Serving Non-English Speakers: 2007 Analysis of Library Demographics, Services and Programs

Talking points

OVERALL

- The strength of our nation has always been the diversity of its people. The strength of libraries is the diversity of their collections and their commitment to serving people of diverse backgrounds.
- Libraries are places of opportunity. They are part of the American Dream, places for education, self-help and lifelong learning.
- About 21 million people in the United States speak limited or no English, 50 percent more than a decade ago.
- Libraries help to level the playing field in the information age. Libraries make information affordable, available and accessible to all people.
- Most of today's libraries provide a wide range of opportunities for people with diverse needs and interests. A national American Library Association study found that the most popular and successful activities offered for non-English speakers are English as Second Language classes, language-specific materials and collections, computer use and classes, and storytimes.
- Spanish is, by far, the most supported non-English language in public libraries, followed by Asian languages, according to the ALA study.
- Reading and library habits constitute the greatest barrier to use of the library by non-English speakers (76 percent), according to librarians responding to a national ALA study.

STUDY BACKGROUND

- In 2006, the ALA Office for Research & Statistics was awarded the World Book – ALA Goal Grant to conduct a study of public library programs and services directed at non-English speakers. This study was further supported by the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, Office for Diversity and Public Programs Office. Research was conducted for ALA by Dr. Christie Koontz and Dean Jue of Florida State University.
- The study's goal was to develop an accurate baseline distribution of linguistically isolated areas in the United States relative to public library location.

- About 1,840 public library outlets, representing 672 unique public library entities in 41 states and the District of Columbia were identified. The states with no public library outlets within a one-mile radius of a linguistically-isolated block group were Alaska, Delaware, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.
- Of the 672 entities, 586 usable surveys were returned. Of the 586, 480 (82 percent) agreed they served a linguistically isolated market.
- The findings presented in this study can provide a venue for developing better and more precise materials, services and programs for those linguistically isolated.

KEY FINDINGS

- Spanish is, by far, the most supported non-English language in public libraries. Seventy-eight percent of libraries reported Spanish as the priority #1 language to which they develop services and programs. Asian languages ranked second in priority at 29 percent. Another 17.6 percent of libraries indicated Indo-European languages as a second priority.
- Conventional wisdom predicted that the density of service would have been in larger, urban settings. The data from this study indicate quite the opposite. Libraries in much smaller communities are meeting the demands of non-English speaking residents.
- The majority of libraries serving non-English speakers are in communities with fewer than 100,000 residents (484 of all responding libraries). The majority (53.6 percent) of residents in these smaller communities traveled between 1-3 miles to reach a library, and another 21 percent traveled between 4-6 miles.
- Even with Spanish being the most heavily supported single language, communities with fewer than 100,000 residents benefited from libraries providing programs and services to Asian-Pacific Islander, Indo-European and multi-language speakers.
- Literacy is both a barrier for non-English speakers and is what most libraries support in specially designed services and programs for these patrons.
- Reading and library habits constitute the greatest barrier to use of the library by non-English speakers (76 percent). Knowledge of the services offered by the library was the second most frequent barrier to their participation (74.7 percent) identified by librarians. A lack of discretionary time was the third most common barrier (73.1 percent).
- Libraries reported the most successful library programs and services developed for non-English speakers were: English as a Second Language (ESL), language-specific materials and collections, computer use and computer classes, story time and special programs.