

**THE CONDITION OF U.S. LIBRARIES:
COOPERATIVES TRENDS, 2003-2009**

[Prepared December, 2009 for ALA Senior Management and Unit Managers]

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About the Report

The full report – *The Condition of U.S. Libraries: Trends, 1999-2009* - highlights US economic trends (2009) and summarizes trends in public, school and academic libraries during the current decade for: Number of Libraries and Population Served, Expenditures, Staffing, and Services. The compilation was prepared in December 2009 for the staff and member leaders of the American Library Association to support its planning activities.

This report is excerpted from the full report and presents the economic landscape and detail about library networks, cooperatives and consortia.

Information about library networks, cooperatives and consortia, organizations that support libraries but do not themselves provide direct service to the public, also are included. These data are now collected and reported by the ALA Association of Specialized & Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA). Information about the studies is online at <http://www.ala.org/ala/research/librarystats/cooperatives/lbcc/lbcc.cfm> and a searchable database is accessible at <http://cs.ala.org/ra/lbcc/>.

In addition, a brief overview of the 2008-2009 economic downturn and its impact on state fiscal planning are provided.

America values its libraries

The American Library Association (ALA) conducts surveys of the public at various intervals to understand household use of public libraries and perceived value of public, school and academic libraries. Most recently, in a January 2009 telephone household survey, KRC Research¹ found that:

American households reported using their public libraries more often in 2009

- 25.4 million Americans reported using their public library more than 20 times in the last year, up from 20.3 million households in 2006.
- The average number of in-person public library visits rose to 12.7 in 2009 from 9.1 in 2006.
- Use of the public library by computer (from home, work or school) doubled from 2006 to 2009 (6 times per year, up from 2.9 times in 2006).
- 22% of Americans visited their public library by computer from home, office or school more often in the last 6 months. This percentage may seem low, but it is about 51 million Americans.

After borrowing library materials, Americans rank entertainment (35%) and educational purposes, such as for homework or taking a class (28%), as the top two reasons for using the library. That's more than 145.8 million Americans.

The value of libraries to American households is unquestioned. A survey conducted in 2009 by KRC Research for the ALA found that

- More than 217 million Americans agree or strongly agree that the public library improves the quality of life in their community. This is an increase from 209.8 million reported in 2006. (KRC 2009)
- More than 222 million Americans agree or strongly agree that because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. This is an increase from 216.6 million reported in 2006. (KRC 2009)

When asked about school libraries

- 97 percent of Americans agree (224.5 million) that school library programs are an essential part of the education experience because they provide resources to students and teachers.
- 96 percent of Americans agree (222 million) that school libraries are important because they give every child the opportunity to read and learn.

¹ <http://www.krcresearch.com/default.htm>

- 92 percent of Americans agree (213 million) that school library programs are a good value for the tax dollar.

When asked about academic libraries

- 95 percent of Americans (220 million) agree that college and research libraries are an essential part of the learning community.
- 97 percent of Americans (224.5 million) agree that college and research libraries connect users with a world of knowledge.

The economic downturn: an overview

The economic downturn that began in 2008 has had significant impact on public and private institutions, among them libraries. The full impact is difficult to articulate and the data challenging to assemble. What we do know is that flat funding has been an obstacle – perhaps even a chronic problem - for many libraries this entire decade. A 2006 ALA survey exposed the level funding trend, with public libraries reporting that level (flat) funding had been a challenge as early as 2003.² A 2009 survey conducted as part of the *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study* revealed a worsening of library funding – about 20 percent reported flat funding continuing in FY2010 and a majority reported budget reductions, about 20 percent reported 5-to-10 percent reductions in FY2010 from FY2009.

As communities and academic campuses develop future fiscal plans it is clear that public, academic and school libraries are visibly hard hit. In fall 2009 report prepared by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 34 states had reported cuts to higher education, which will impact academic libraries and 25 states had cut funding to K-12, which will impact school libraries. Many organizations and government agencies are grappling with the impact of the economic downturn and a few reports are of particular note.

A recent report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a non-partisan organization focusing on policy affecting low- and moderate-income families and individuals, issued a series of reports in October 2009 regarding state budget reductions and projected mid-year shortfalls in 2010. Two reports of note include:

- An Update on State Budget Cuts: At Least 41 States Have Imposed Cuts That Hurt Vulnerable Residents; Federal Economic Recovery Funds and State Tax Increases Are Reducing the Harm. Nicholas Johnson, Phil Oliff, and Jeremy Koulish (October 20, 2009) <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1214>
- Recession Continues to Batter State Budgets; State Responses Could Slow Recovery. Elizabeth McNichol and Nicholas Johnson (October 20, 2009) <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=711>

The following slides present the number of states reporting budget cuts by the group or sector impacted, including

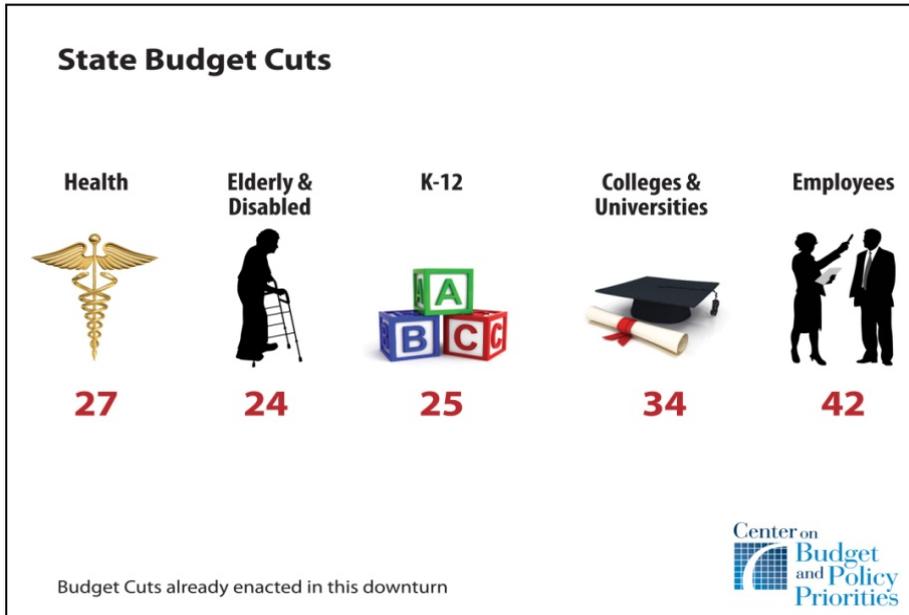
- health
- elderly & disabled
- K-12
- colleges & universities
- employees

and are excerpted from a presentation made by Phil Oliff and Mike Leachman of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and were distributed through a Committee for Education Funding (CEF) ALERT, “Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (FCM Notes)” (2 November 2009).³ All slides are the property of

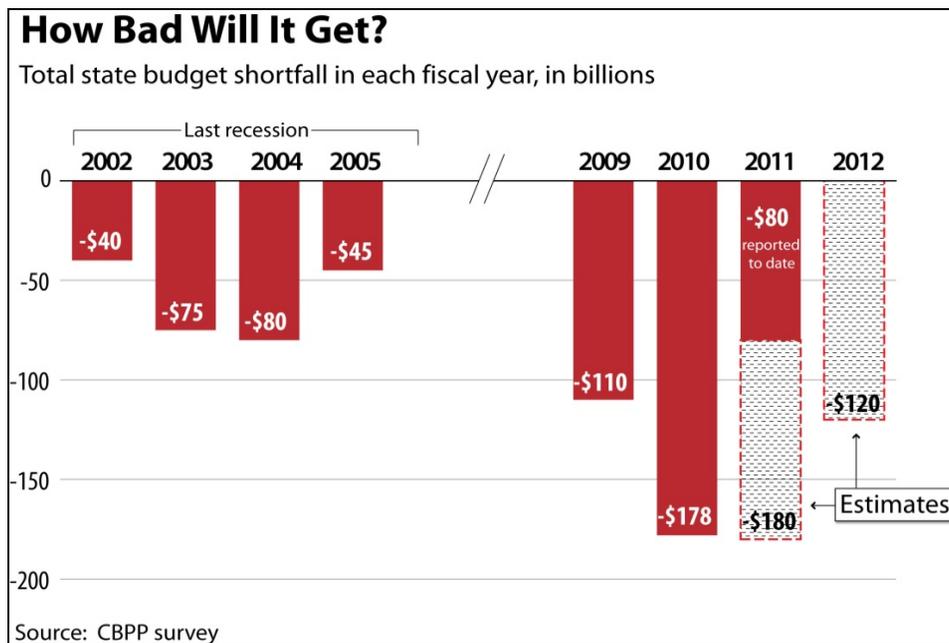
² (<http://www.ala.org/ala/research/librystats/public/fundingissuesinuspls.pdf>).

³ The Committee for Education Funding (<http://www.cef.org/>) is a member organization working to improve federal funding for the US education system.

the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (<http://www.cbpp.org/>) and links to individual slides are noted as available.



Source: (CBPP 2009) <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1214>



Source: (CBPP 2009) <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=711>

Providing Services to Libraries: The Role of Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia

The following findings are excerpted from the final report of a research study conducted by ALA, *Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia: A National Survey* (released December 3, 2007, <http://www.ala.org/ala/research/librарystats/cooperatives/lncclncc.cfm>). The 2008-2009 data will be available from the ALA Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) at <http://cs.ala.org/ra/lnccl/>.

Library networks, cooperatives and consortia (LNCCs) are legally established organizations that serve libraries, not the public, and provide a range of services to its member libraries. For the most part, LNCCs are regional (i.e., multi-county) in geography and serve multiple library types. Of the 204 eligible LNCCs responding to a 2005-2006 baseline survey, 125 (61%) were regional. Another 52 (26%) were local, and 24 (12%) were statewide organizations.

Types of Member Libraries

Public libraries are served by 167 LNCCs (82%); academic libraries, by 121 (59%), and school libraries, by 99 (49%). Special libraries are served by only 93 LNCCs (46%)—the most frequent types of special library members being medical, non-profit, and institutional.

Purposes Served

The most common services and activities of LNCCs—ones reported by three out of four responding organizations—include:

- communication with member libraries
- resource sharing
- general professional development
- general consulting and technical assistance and
- cooperative purchasing or group discounts

At least a majority of responding LNCCs also provide:

- automation, networking and other technology services
- library advocacy, public relations, and marketing
- information and referral services and
- courier or other document delivery services

Fewer than half of LNCCs reported providing:

- standards/guidelines development or support
- support for services to special populations
- library and information science professional collections
- rotating or other shared collections and
- digitization or other preservation efforts

Revenue sources distributed as:

- State government 28%
- Membership fees 9%
- Local, Federal governments (incl. E-rate) combined <10%
- Other 53%

Expenditures

Unlike libraries, LNCCs spend less on staff as a proportion of overall operating expenditures. Total expenditures reported in 2005-2006 were \$365 million. Products & services for member libraries accounted for 44 percent of total operating expenditures and staff about 30 percent.

Staffing

Eight (8) full-time equivalent staff was the midpoint reported by LNCCs in 2005-2006.

- 8+ FTE: 51% of reporting LNCCs
- <8 FTE: 49% of reporting LNCCs

Priorities

From a list of 15 organizational priorities, LNCCs ranked these the highest:

- Automation / networking / other technology
- Courier / document delivery
- Resource-sharing
- General professional development / continuing education

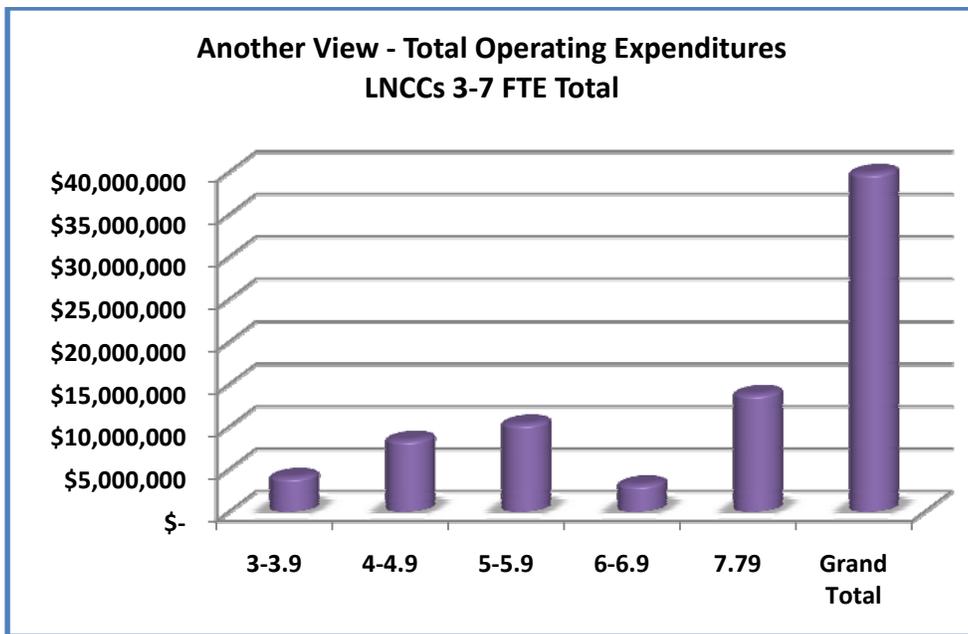
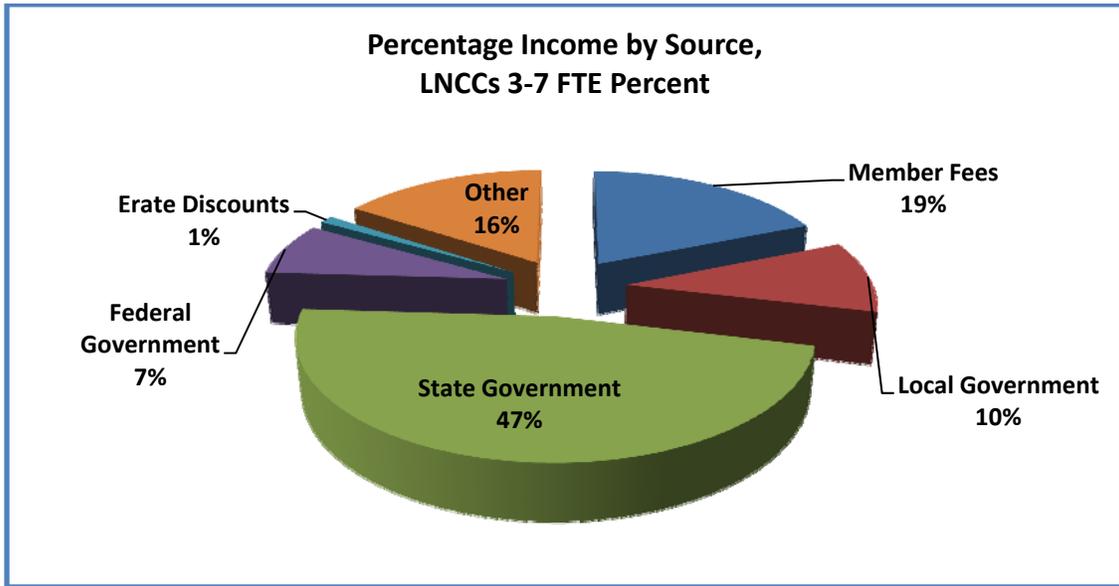
Lowest priorities:

- Advocacy / PR / marketing
- E-rate

- Special populations
- Standards / guidelines

Size of LNCCs

Staffing and total membership - made the greatest difference in the range of services provided to member libraries. The following graphics present detail for priorities for services, income, and expenditures for LNCCs with 3-7 staff, the most predominant range for 51% of those responding to the 2007 detailed survey.



2009 LNCC Update

Fifty-two LNCCs responded to an updated survey conducted in summer 2009 by ALA-ASCLA. Preliminary findings indicate little change in the distribution of LNCCs' membership

- **Geography** - Regional , 61%
- **Membership** of LNCCs:
 - Public libraries, 92%
 - Academic libraries 72%

- School libraries, 55.6%
 - Medical/Health libraries, 55.6%
 - Law libraries, 42.6%
 - Institutional/Correctional libraries, 35.2%
 - Corporate libraries, 33%
 - Non-profit libraries, 42.6%
- **Staffing** – 1-8 FTE, 50%; more than 8 FTE, 46%
 - **Top ranked services**

Provided now: Professional development, Resource sharing, Automation, Courier services, General Consulting, Cooperative purchasing.

Provided in the next 2-to-3 years: Cooperative purchasing, Professional development, Resource sharing, Automation, Courier services, Library advocacy.