

# Interlibrary Loan Among Academic Libraries – Ups and Downs in Colorado

ED3/110.10/No. 266

January 28, 2009

Interlibrary loan (ILL) in Colorado academic libraries is headed in two different directions, per figures reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).<sup>i</sup> Two types of items are involved in ILL returnable items and non-returnable items.

Returnable items are materials the lending library expects to be returned, such as books, sound recordings, audiovisual materials, and microfilm reels. Non-returnable items are materials that do not need to be returned, such as photocopies, print copies from microfilm, electronic and full-text documents.<sup>ii</sup>

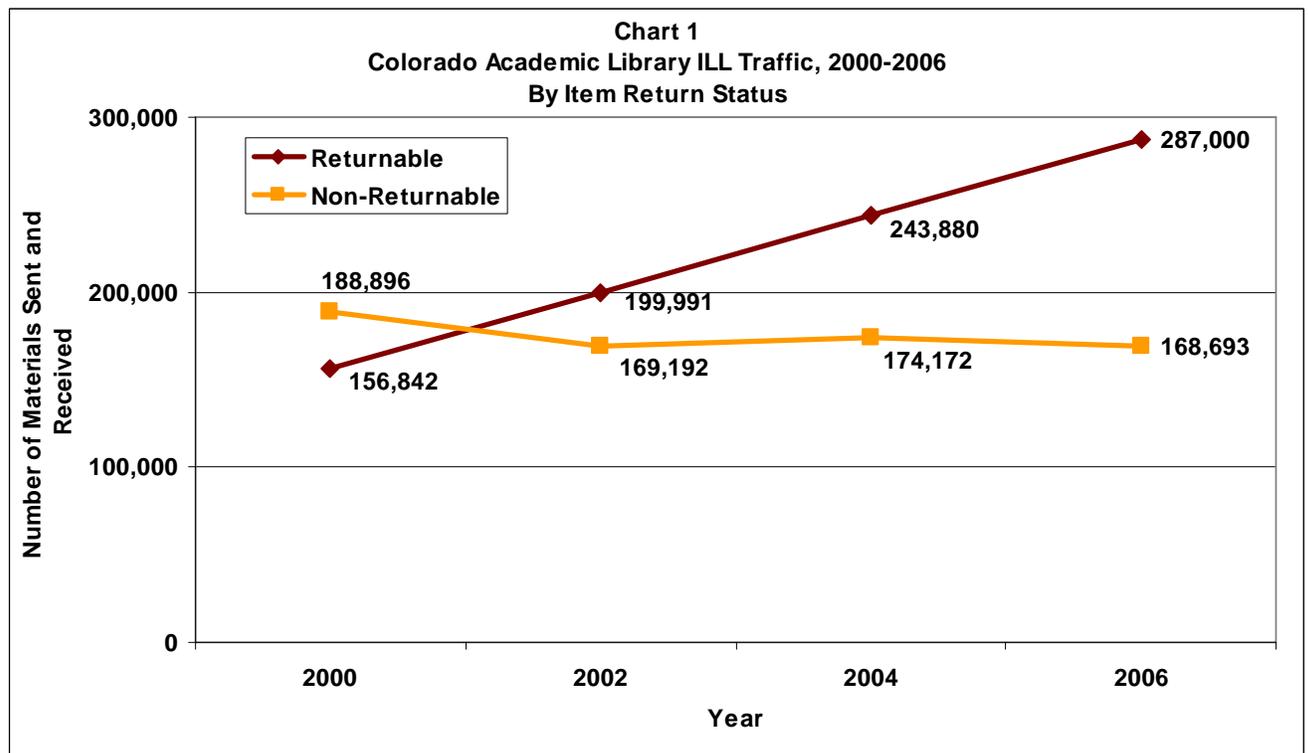
Colorado's academic libraries experienced an interesting combination of changes in interlibrary loan traffic between 2000 and 2006. A large increase in interlibrary loans for returnable items occurred, while interlibrary loans for non-returnable items decreased. (See Chart 1.)

- ILL for returnable items increased 83.0%, from 156,842 to 287,000
- ILL for non-returnable items decreased 10.7%, from 188,896 to 168,693

### Comparing National and Colorado Interlibrary Loan Data

Trends identified in Colorado are also occurring nationally, although not to the same extent in most areas

- Nationally, non-returnable items loaned decreased by 5.3% (more than three times Colorado's decrease)
- Returnable items loaned increased by 34.0% nationally, which is just over half that of Colorado's growth of 64.7%
- Non-returnable items borrowed nationally decreased by 1.6%, much less than Colorado's decrease of 18.4%
- Returnable items borrowed nationally increased by a notable 40.8%, but Colorado's increase of 107.4% is substantially larger

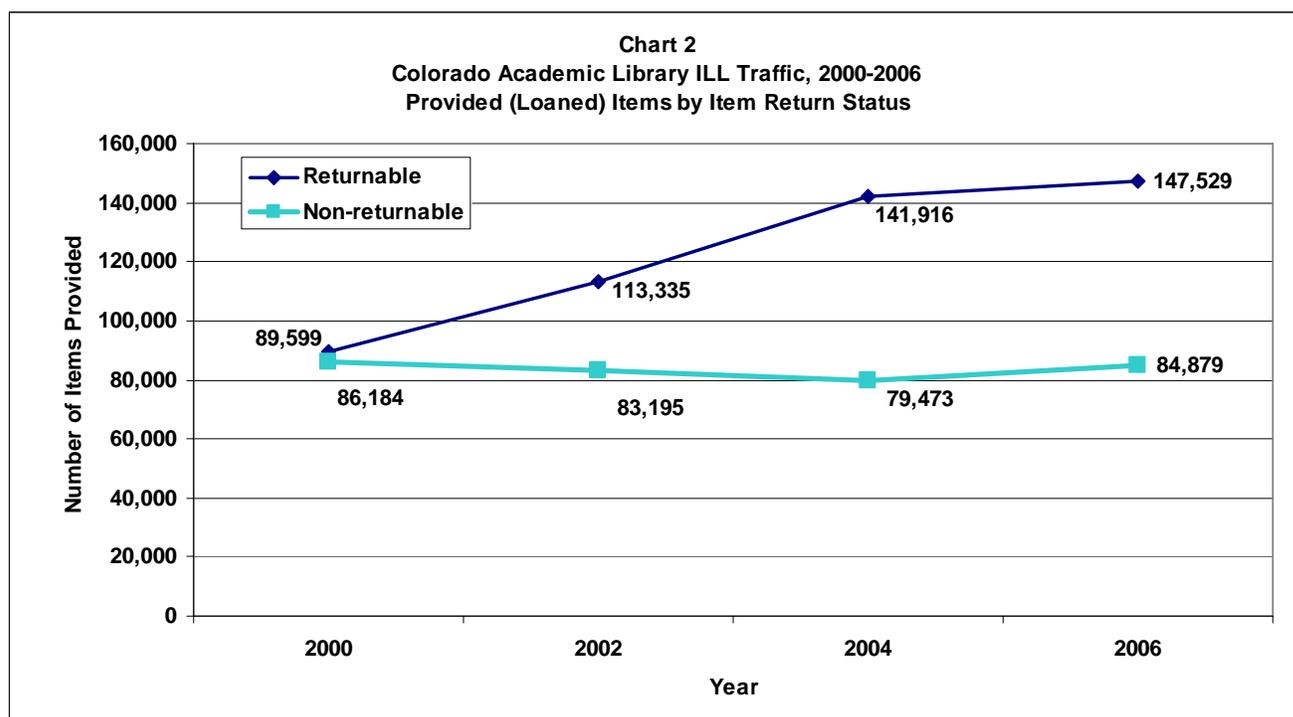


Interlibrary loan can be further divided into items provided and items received. Provided items are materials loaned by the academic library via ILL and received items are materials borrowed by the academic library via ILL.

### Items Provided (Loaned)

Between 2000 and 2006, items provided by Colorado's academic libraries had a slight decrease for non-returnable items and a significant increase in returnable items. (See Chart 2.)

- ILL for *non-returnable* items provided decreased from 86,184 to 84,879, a drop of 1.5%
- ILL for *returnable* items provided rose from 89,599 to 147,529, an increase of 64.7%

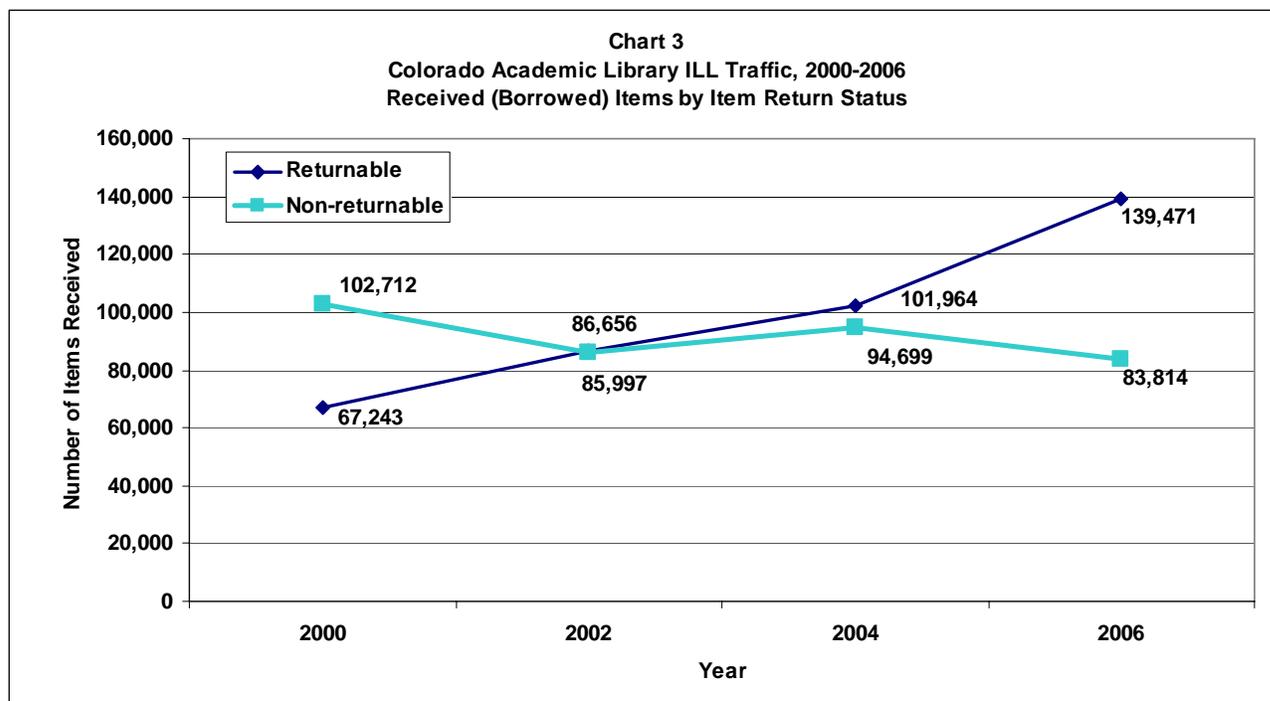


### Items Received (Borrowed)

A larger change was seen among items received by Colorado's academic libraries between 2000 and 2006. The decrease was sharper for non-returnable items received than that of items provided and the number of returnable items received more than doubled between 2000 and 2006. (See Chart 3.)

- ILL for *non-returnable* items received decreased from 102,712 to 83,814, a drop of 18.4%
- ILL for *returnable* items received rose from 67,243 to 139,471, an increase of 107.4%





### Why the ups and downs?

A likely reason for the decrease in non-returnable ILL requests is the increasing availability of electronic full-text databases offered by academic libraries. The ease, convenience, and immediacy of downloading a full-text article when needed could decrease the need for copied articles to be sent from one library to another.

Anne K. Beaubien, in her ARL White Paper (2007), suggests that ILL requests have increased in the past few years because there has been “an increase in discovery tools, such as indices, search the Web, and Google Books that [have] augmented people’s awareness of publications.”<sup>iii</sup> With the increased knowledge of what is available, it is possible that students, faculty, and staff are increasingly utilizing ILL at academic libraries.

The larger increase in Colorado’s ILL, as compared to the national increase, could be related to Prospector, a service provided by the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries. Prospector is the unified catalog of twenty-three academic, public, and special libraries in Colorado and Wyoming.<sup>iv</sup> Fifteen of the twenty-three participating libraries are academic libraries. The accessibility of searching the catalogs of twenty-three libraries across the state could account for Colorado’s larger increase in ILL for returnable items.

Rose Nelson, Systems Librarian for the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, said, “I think one of the benefits of having a union catalog where most of the libraries run the same ILS, such as in the case of our INN-Reach system, is that patron placed holds are a seamless process; which in turn, increases ILL usage.”<sup>v</sup> She also attributes the increase in ILL usage to the statewide courier service. “[T]his coupled with Prospector is much of the reason ILL usage is so high in Colorado.”<sup>5</sup>



## Conclusion

It is known that Colorado's ILL usage for non-returnable items is going down and ILL usage for returnable items is clearly going up. However, it is not known for sure what is causing these trends in ILL in Colorado. Increased full-text options, Prospector, and the statewide courier service are all strong possibilities.

## Sources

<sup>i</sup> NCES Academic Library Surveys for 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006. The Academic Library Survey (ALS) is conducted by the NCES biennially. Data is collected regarding library services, collections, library staff, expenditures, electronic services, and information literacy. See: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/getpubcats.asp?sid=041#>.

<sup>ii</sup> NCES E.D. Tab Academic Libraries: 2000. See: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004317.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Beaubien, Anne K. (2007). ARL White Paper on Interlibrary Loan. Retrieved August 28, 2008, from [http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/ARL\\_white\\_paper\\_ILL\\_june07.pdf](http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/ARL_white_paper_ILL_june07.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> About the Prospector Colorado Unified Catalog. Retrieved November 4, 2008, from [http://prospector.coalliance.org/screens/about\\_prospector.html](http://prospector.coalliance.org/screens/about_prospector.html).

<sup>v</sup> Email communication with Rose Nelson of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, November 13, 2008.

### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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Fast Facts – Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service

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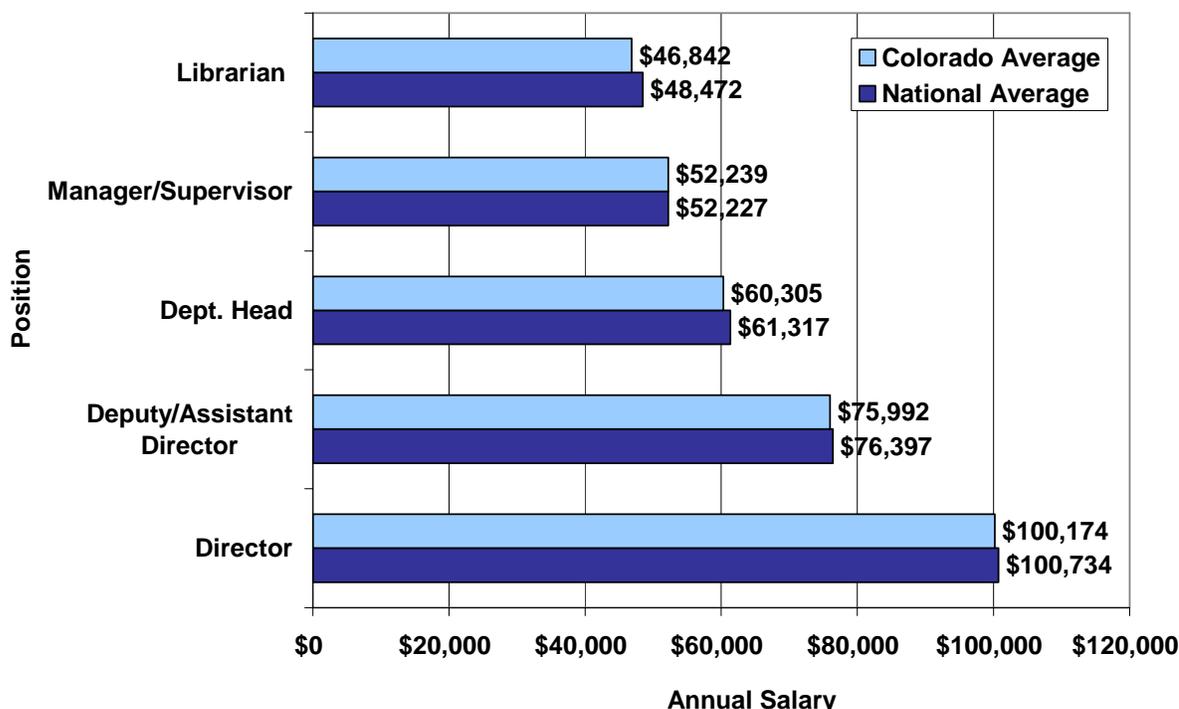
# COLORADO PUBLIC LIBRARIAN SALARIES KEEPING PACE WITH NATIONAL AVERAGES

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Librarian salaries in Colorado's larger public libraries are keeping pace with national averages, according to data collected by the Library Research Service and the American Library Association's (ALA) annual salary survey.

**Chart 1**  
**Comparison of Average Public Library Staff Salaries**  
**for Colorado and the U.S. 2008**



Salaries for managers/supervisors in Colorado libraries were nearly equal to the national average. Salaries for all other positions lagged behind the national statistics by an average of about \$900 annually. (See Chart 1.)

The ALA survey found librarian salaries nationwide gained 2.8 percent between 2006 and 2007 for all positions in public libraries of all sizes. In Colorado libraries serving populations of 25,000 or more, salaries for all positions increased an average of 5.6 percent between 2006 and 2007.

*Note: The averages used in this article were calculated using average salaries reported by LRS and the ALA salary survey for libraries serving populations over 25,000. In 2007, 26 public libraries in Colorado served populations over 25,000. Because job duties and descriptions in smaller libraries tend to vary widely and are therefore more difficult to compare, smaller libraries were not included in this analysis.*



### Sources

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Grady, J. & Davis, D. (2008). 2008 ALA-APA Salary Survey: Librarian – Public and Academic. American Library Association – Allied Professional Association.

Library Research Service. (2008). 2007 Colorado Public Library Annual Report (Survey).  
[www.lrs.org/public/stats.php?year=2007](http://www.lrs.org/public/stats.php?year=2007).

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## Book, Newspaper, and Periodical Prices, 2004-2010

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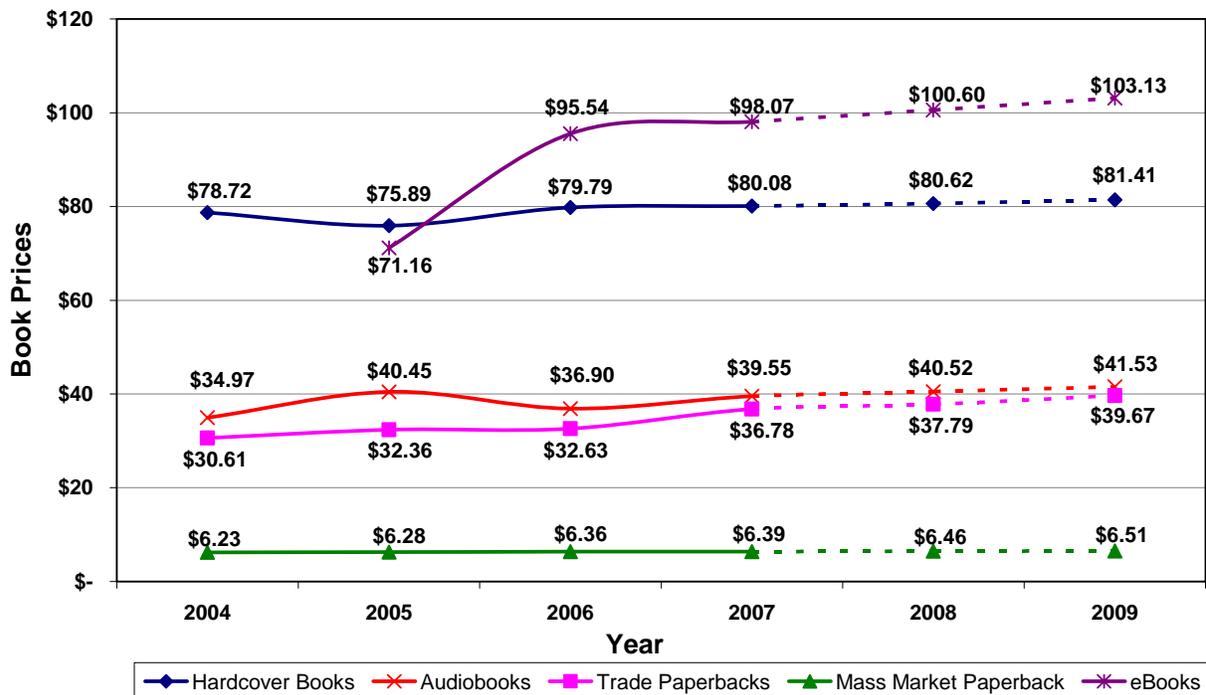
### Books

During times of a slowing economy and the tightening of city, state, and national budgets, it is important to prepare for how to best meet the needs of library patrons. Studying trends in library material price changes helps to anticipate the challenges of collection development. Libraries face ever-increasing prices for materials and on a yearly basis the prices go up and down, but the overall trend is a steady increase in prices.

Trade paperbacks are leading price increases with a 20.2 percent change between 2004 and 2007. Continuing this trend, prices would increase approximately 4 percent per year. (See Chart 1.)

The 2008 Book Prices Fast Facts includes data from 2004 to present and is compiled from the book wholesaler Baker & Taylor and its subsidiary, YBP Library Services. Past data has been compiled from Bowker's Books in Print.

**Chart 1**  
Average US Book Prices 2004 to 2009



Source: [http://www.ybp.com/title\\_reports\\_2007.html](http://www.ybp.com/title_reports_2007.html); Bogart, D. (2008)2.  
Note: 2008-09 based on trend analysis

During this same period, audio book prices experienced the second highest increase with a change of 13.1 percent. Although audio book prices tend to fluctuate up and down along with audio book sales, overall prices are trending up 2.5 percent per year. (See Chart 1.)



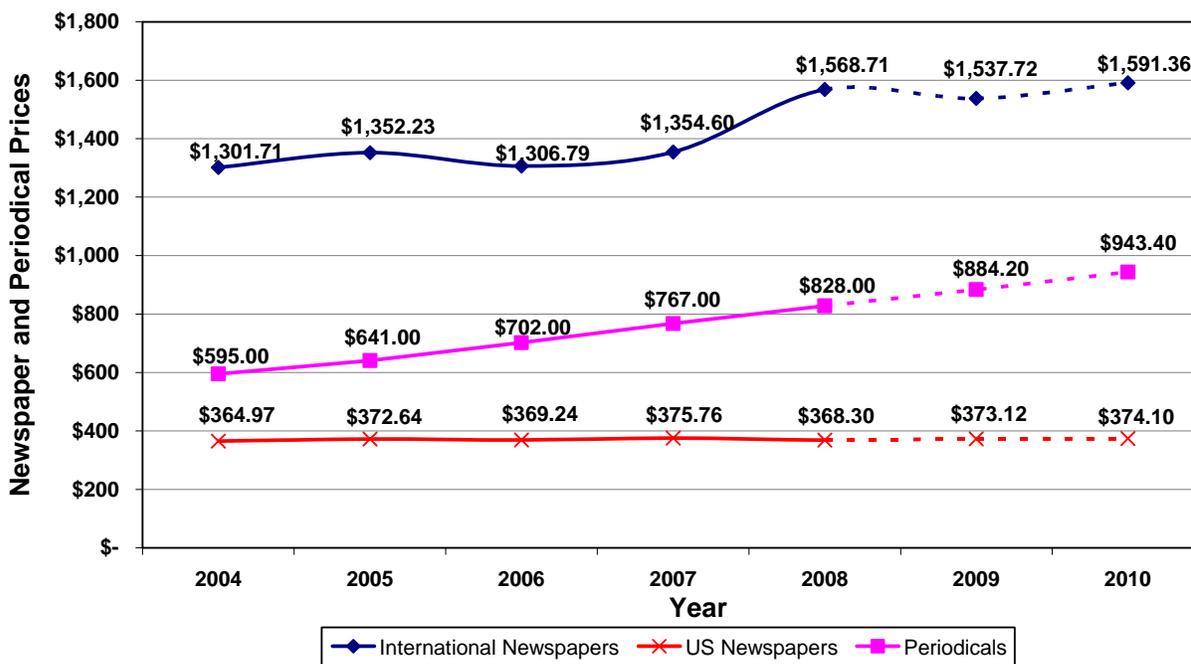
The desire to provide library patrons with materials on multiple platforms is increasing the sales of electronic books (e-books). Prices rose drastically with an increase of 37.8 percent between 2005 and 2006 following an average sales increase of 34.5 percent between 2004 and 2006. YBP Library Services believes that e-book prices have stabilized with market demand. Future price increases are expected to be less volatile, likely following print book pricing trends.<sup>1</sup>

### Newspapers and Periodicals

While the material price of international newspapers has remained steady, the cost of shipping has brought about a recent sharp increase in the absolute price. (See Chart 2.) The number of U.S. newspapers is slowly decreasing and the price change has been relatively small. Increasing popularity of the online news format is forcing some newspapers to keep prices low, or move to online only formats, in order to stay competitive.<sup>3</sup>

Periodical prices rose 39.2 percent between 2004 and 2008. However, prices may increase around 6.7 percent in both 2009 and 2010. (See Chart 2.) According to *The Bowker Annual Library and Book Trade Almanac, 53<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, periodical publishers are looking for better ways to price periodicals because libraries are having difficulty affording print and online versions of journals.<sup>3</sup>

**Chart 2**  
**Average US Newspaper and Periodical**  
**Prices from 2004 to 2010**



Source: Van Orsdel, L., & Born, K. (2008)4; Bogart, D. (2008)5  
 Note: 2009-10 based on trend analysis



## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Bruning, N. (October, 2008). Annual Book Price Update. *YBP Library Services*. Retrieved on November 15, 2008 from [http://www.ybp.com/book\\_price\\_update.html](http://www.ybp.com/book_price_update.html).

<sup>2</sup> Bogart, D. (ed.). (2008). *The Bowker Annual Library and Book Trade Almanac, 53<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. 2008. New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Van Orsdel, L., & Born, K. (2008). Embracing Openness. *Library Journal* (1976), 133(7), 53-8. Retrieved October 28, 2008, from Library Lit & Inf Full Text database.

<sup>5</sup> Bogart, D. (2008).

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# Is it Worth It? The Perceived Value of an MLIS Degree

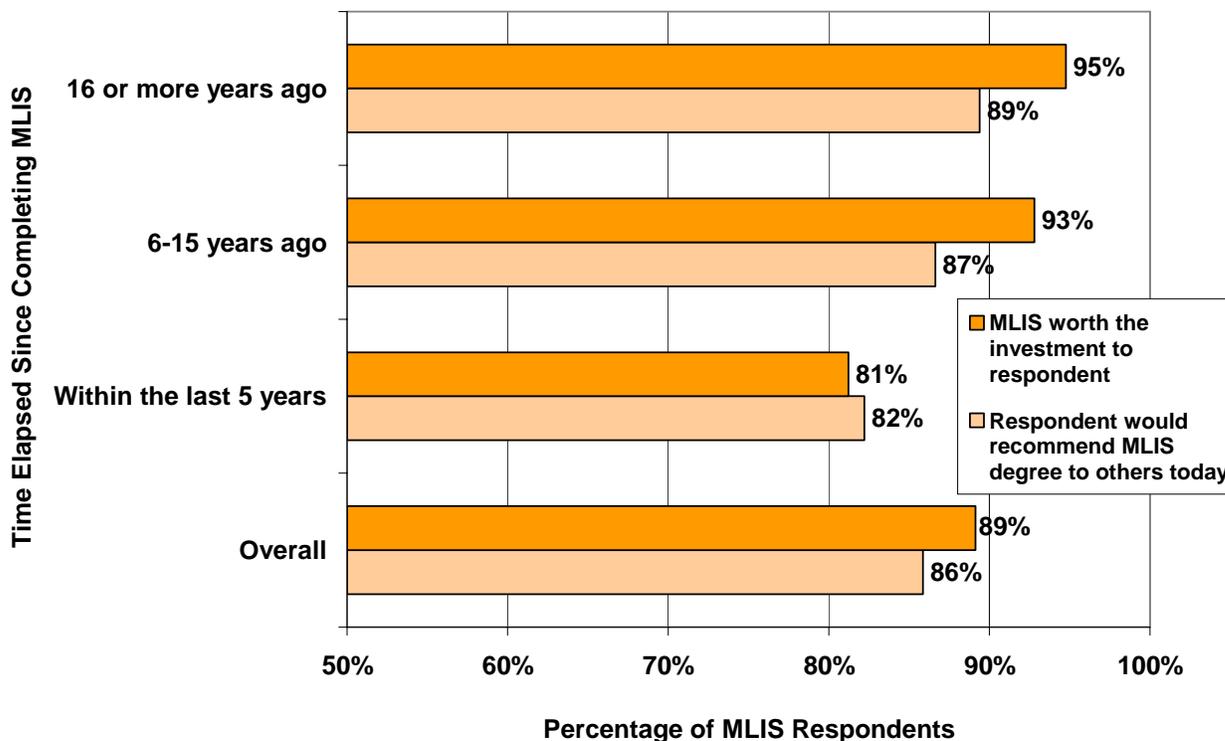
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April 20, 2009

**Would you recommend getting an MLIS to a new graduate?** This question, recently posed on libnet (a Colorado-based library listserv), prompted an immediate flurry of thoughtful responses. The number and intensity of the responses inspired us to launch the Library Research Service's inaugural 60-Second Survey, "The Value of an MLIS to You." Distributed primarily via listservs and blog posts, the survey response was tremendous. There were almost 2,000 responses, including respondents from each of the 50 states and 6 continents. But, the respondents didn't stop at just answering the questions. More than 1,000 of them left over 56,000 words worth of comments further explaining their thoughts and feelings about the value of a Master Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree. Clearly, librarians feel passionately about this topic.

In the style of the online reader poll (à la CNN), the survey was short and to the point. With a single purpose, to capture librarians' gut-reaction to "is an MLIS worth it," respondents were asked just seven questions, including the two key questions: 1) Do you feel your MLIS degree was/is worth the time and money invested in it? 2) If asked today, would you recommend pursuing an MLIS degree?

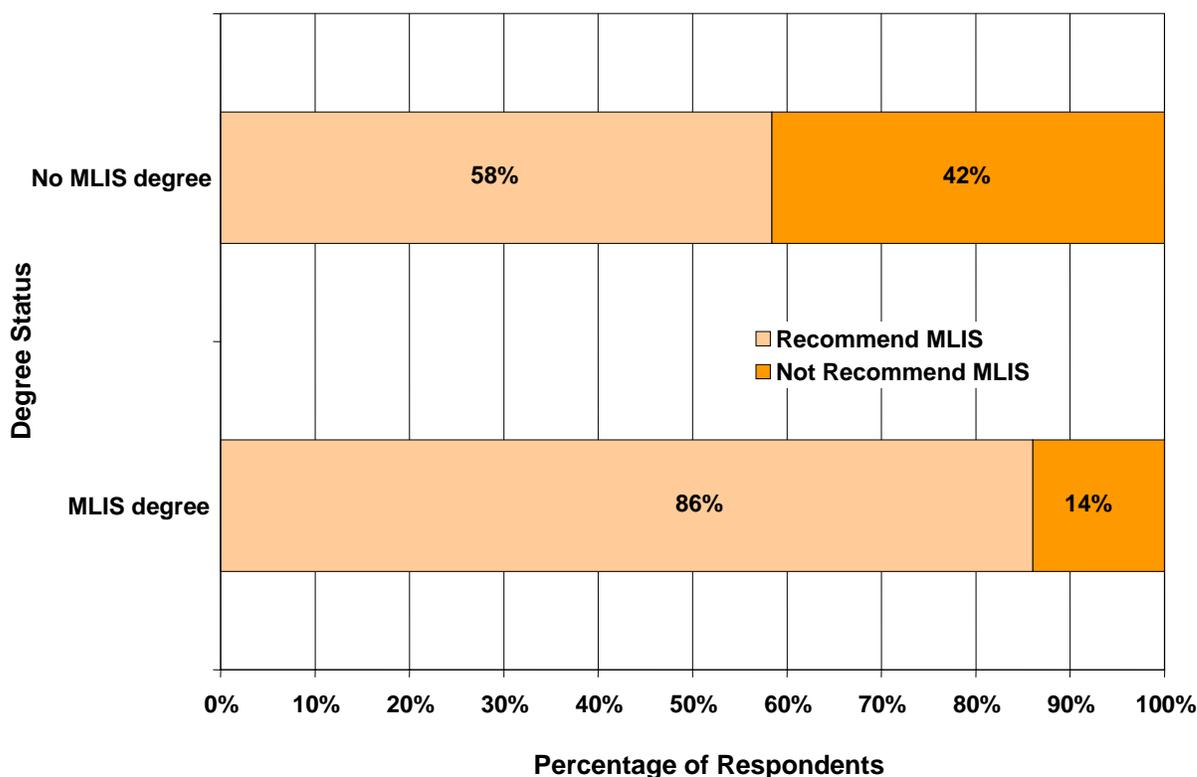
**Respondents' Perceptions of the Value of an MLIS Degree  
By Years Since Earning Degree**



The survey found that overall, librarians are satisfied with their MLIS degree and would recommend it to others. Nine out of ten (89%) said they felt the degree was worth the time and money they invested in it. Only slightly fewer (86%) said they would recommend the degree to others. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who stay in librarianship are most apt to value their MLIS. An astonishing 95% of librarians that received their degree 16 or more years ago felt their degree was worth it. They were also the most likely to recommend the degree to others (89%). Those who graduated in the last five years were the least likely to feel their MLIS had value, with 81% indicating the degree was worth it and 82% indicating they would recommend it to others. Still, more than eight out of ten recent grads thought the MLIS worth the investment.

There are undoubtedly many reasons for this gap in the perceived value of the degree between MLIS graduates. Based on the comments, newly minted MLISers were concerned about job availability, adequate compensation, and paying off student loans. Whereas many of the respondents who had had their degree for a longer period of time commented that their MLIS was valuable in *their* career. However, they also expressed concern that the profession had changed considerably from when they were new MLIS recipients and they pondered the value of the degree, as well as the future of the librarianship in the age of Google. (For more on the comments see Fast Facts no. 270).

**Percentage of Respondents That Would Recommend an MLIS Degree by MLIS Status**



Non-MLIS respondents had a very different opinion about the value of a master of library science degree with only 58% saying it is worth the time and money invested in it. Given that they chose not to pursue an MLIS, this attitude seems quite logical. Many non-MLIS respondents commented that there was no financial or other benefit to getting an MLIS. Frequently these respondents said they were in a community or institution that did not pay more or promote staff based on MLIS status. In addition, some respondents didn't find value in the degree because they felt the work done in libraries could be done as well—or better—by paraprofessionals.

This survey was conceived with the intention of quickly measuring the opinions on the value of an MLIS degree. Because the respondents to this survey were a self-selected group, there is no way to generalize the results to apply to all librarians or the profession as a whole. In other words, this was not setup as a scientific study with a representative sample. Based on the distribution of people and library jobs in the United States, we received more responses from the West (38% of U.S. respondents) and Northeast (37%) than would be expected, and fewer from the Midwest (12%) and South (13%). However, there were no significant differences between regions in responses to most of the questions, and in particular to whether they would recommend the degree.



It seems clear that librarians find their MLIS degrees valuable and they would recommend the degree—and by implication the profession—to others. The overwhelming response to this quick survey suggests that there is room for further study into the value of an MLIS. There are larger issues, as well as subtleties, that need to be explored.

#### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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# In Your Own Words: The Value of an MLIS

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April 20, 2009

In May 2008, the LRS 60-Second Survey, “The Value of an MLIS to You,” was released, prompted by a 2008 posting on a Colorado-based library listserv that asked a simple question: Would you recommend an MLIS degree to a recent college graduate?

Enthusiastic responses to the listserv question from dozens of people inspired the Library Research Service to create its own survey, distributed mostly via listservs and blogs. Almost 2,000 responses from all 50 states and six continents were received, and over half included voluntary comments further explaining respondents’ thoughts about the MLIS degree.

Overall, the results of the survey showed that respondents do value the MLIS. Nine out of ten (89%) respondents said their degree was worth the investment. However, not quite as many would recommend the degree to others (86%).<sup>1</sup> This is a small difference, and it and other subtleties of the responses may be explained in the many thoughtful comments left by respondents.

In reviewing more than 1,000 comments received on the “Value of an MLIS to You” survey, many themes emerged and most fell into six categories. These categories were the overall perception of the profession, the job market, the intrinsic value of the degree, personal financial impact, MLIS content, and career advancement. Each comment was tagged with the categories that it covered, and whether the comment was perceived to be positive or negative.

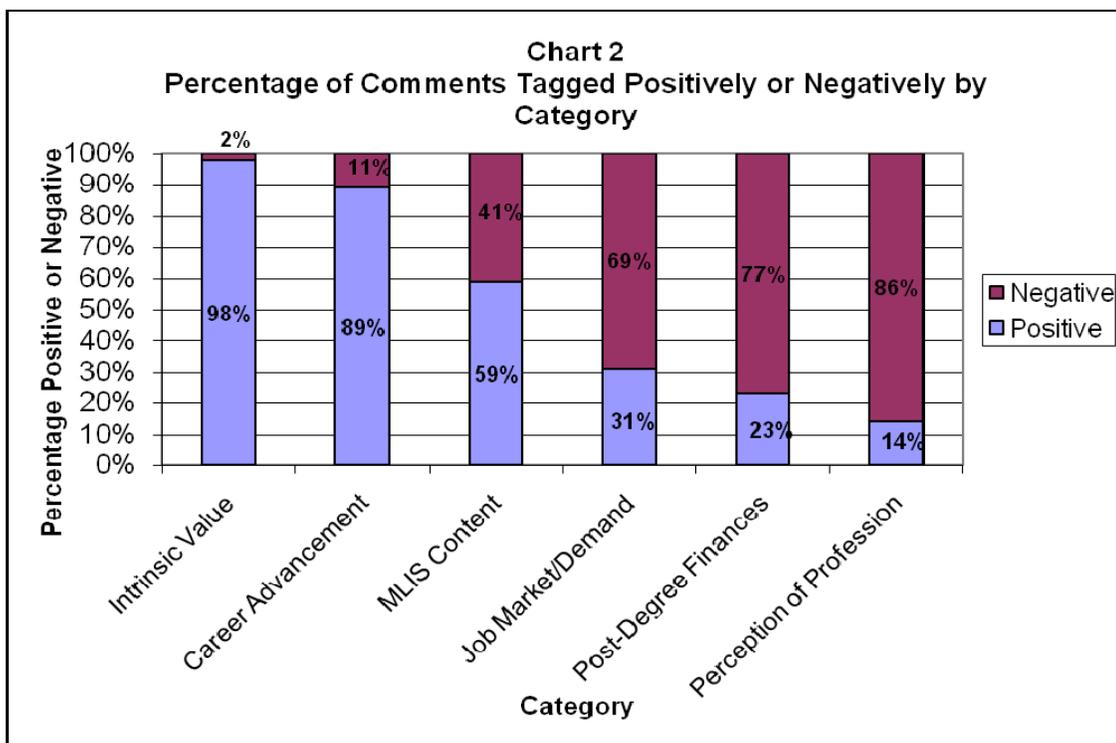
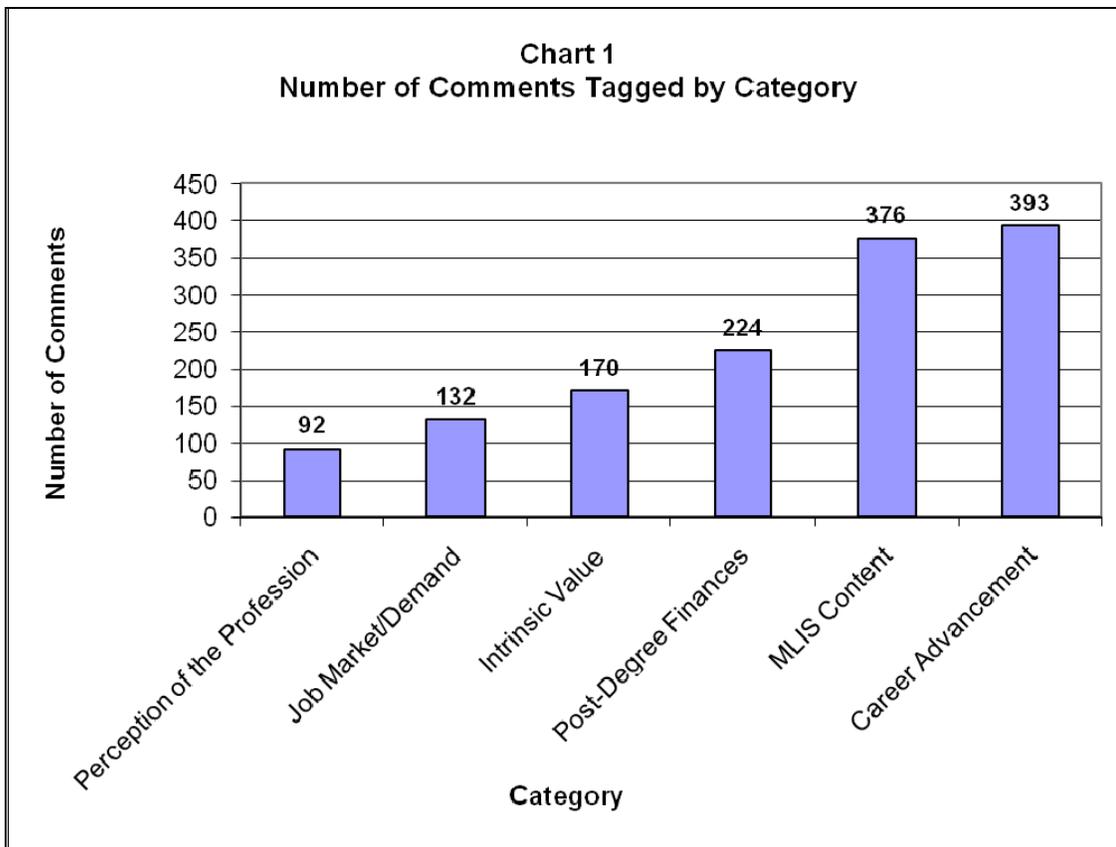
Many comments mentioned more than one theme and were included in multiple categories. Chart 1 shows the number of times a category was mentioned at least once in a comment. Chart 2 shows the number of responses that were perceived as positive and negative in each category. No comments were tagged as both positive and negative *within* a category, but some respondents did make positive comments in one category and negative comments in another category. The overall tone of the comments is analyzed later in this Fast Facts. The categories are discussed in order of most positive response received to least positive response received.

## Definition of Comment Categories

- *Perception of the profession:* relating to the public’s view and/or appreciation of librarianship
- *Job market:* availability of professional positions for MLIS holders and the ease or difficulty in obtaining those positions
- *Intrinsic value:* personal values and beliefs related to working in the profession
- *Personal Financial Impact:* the cost of the degree and the salaries earned post-degree
- *MLIS content:* MLIS degree programs and curriculum
- *Career advancement:* the ability to advance in a library career

<sup>1</sup> For complete findings from the survey, see: Fast Facts no. 269





## Intrinsic Value

Comments that were categorized as relating to intrinsic value were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety-eight percent (167) were categorized as positive – more so than any other category. The comments in this category were defined as those that mentioned personal values and beliefs.

The intrinsic value of the MLIS degree was regarded positively in multiple respects that included recognizing librarianship as an opportunity to contribute to society and being a part of a profession that is congruous with their value system. Respondents articulated many underlying values, including the defense of intellectual freedom, the search for truth, provision of sound information, and betterment of self and community. Other respondents mentioned that the degree gave them the capacity to shape their interests and talents into a fulfilling career that they love and enjoy. Based on their remarks, most of these respondents implied that job satisfaction has value above monetary compensation.

*“For me, the value of the MLIS lies in the feeling of having a fulfilling, important career. Every day I feel as though I am making a difference. The degree was worth the money in the knowledge I have utilized every day alone. If I could go back, I would do it again.”*

The few respondents in this category who left comments perceived as being negative expressed personal preferences for paraprofessional work, and a dislike of the role of politics in libraries.

*“This degree has allowed me to get a job that I enjoy – that is worth every penny I lost from a higher paying job that I hated.”*

## Career Advancement

More comments referred to career advancement than any other category. Of the 393 comments related to career advancement, almost nine out of ten (89%) were positive. These respondents seemed to feel that the MLIS is essential for a successful career in libraries. Many stated specifically that they had advanced and experienced flexibility in their own career due to the MLIS degree. For many respondents the value of the MLIS degree is exhibited in the number and type of opportunities available when one has the degree. Some wrote that the degree turned what was formerly just a job into a profession, and others commented on the portability of the degree and the wide range of opportunities available to MLIS graduates. Others mentioned the salary increases that came with the degree as proof of its value.

*“It was the only way I could obtain a professional position. Right now, our library is being cut. MLIS positions were saved.”*



*"I started studying for my MLS when I was 44. I had already worked in libraries for 8 years and wondered if it would be too late for it to make a difference in my career. It has! It opened many professional doors for me and today I am the director of our public library."*

Some respondents who didn't have the degree would recommend it for others, but said they chose not to pursue it because it would not bring any career advances or pay increases, often due to personal factors (e.g., the respondent was unable to relocate or the rural library they worked for did not employ degreed librarians).

### MLIS Content

Comments in this category related to the quality and value of the MLIS degree program and/or coursework. MLIS content was mentioned in 376 comments, making it the second most common theme, and one of the most divisive. Respondents expressed strong opinions, both positive and negative, about the MLIS.

*"Learning the theory behind what we do is important, and is a framework for decisions that we make. I learned about sources and services that I use to this day. A lot of what I learned has changed, and a lot was not even invented (internet, for one), but I've been able to adapt because I had the foundation of knowledge."*

Comments in this category that were perceived as being positive (60%) usually referred to the MLIS degree as an essential foundation that provided theoretical and historical grounding for the profession and contributed to a common culture among librarians.

Some respondents stressed that in order to be successful, the MLIS student would need to pursue practical experience and participate in professional development activities in addition to their formal education.

*"The value of the degree is completely dependent on the experience the student intends to have. Some will treat the MLIS like it is a true graduate degree; others will treat LIS school like it is trade school, or a rite of passage. Some students will leave LIS school with a line for the resume; others will leave with a robust curriculum vitae that will only continue to develop."*

However, 41 percent of comments related to MLIS content were perceived as being negative. These respondents voiced disappointment with their degree programs, criticizing the relevance and academic rigor of their courses. Some felt the curriculum was outdated, and

*"I wouldn't recommend that someone get a degree, except that it's a requirement for the job. There is no real content to an MLS degree... the MLS curriculum was really very silly. Not graduate level work at all."*



lamented the lack of technology, management, or library instruction courses. Several wrote that the skills they learned on the job were more valuable than the skills they learned in school or negated the need for an MLIS entirely.

### Job Market

Several respondents voiced frustrations with the job market – their comments were generally perceived as negative. Of the 132 comments tagged as job market, 91 of them were categorized as negative. Many argued that the market is saturated, especially in areas

*“It has been an unbelievably frustrating, sad, disheartening experience to work so hard for a degree with so little economic or professional value. I simply cannot find work, and after 6 years of looking, I am giving up on the field.”*

where there are one or more library schools. Without additional data, it is impossible to know whether the dearth of job opportunities was real or perceived, but the

presence of this theme indicates it is a legitimate concern for those who commented. Some comments explained that the job market is tight especially for those without library experience and for those who are unwilling to relocate for a position. Some mentioned the notion that new librarians have been drawn to the field, due in part to the oft-cited librarian shortage brought about by the large number of librarians expected to retire. Many expressed feelings that the librarian shortage has not materialized and would not materialize any time soon.

A few respondents, however, noted that the variety of career possibilities for graduates made the MLIS a valuable degree, and their comments were often perceived as positive.

*“Marketed effectively, these skills open up many opportunities within the “traditional” boundaries of our profession, as well as outside of those boundaries.”*

### Personal Financial Impact

Of the 224 comments that mentioned personal financial impact, 77 percent were perceived as negative. Several respondents mentioned the struggle to pay back student loans on

*“Given the low wages and poor opportunities for advancement in the field, within my geographic area anyway, I’m questioning whether all the debt I went in to get my MLIS was worth it. And I was one of the lucky ones in my class who got a full-time job shortly after graduation.”*

librarian salaries; others wrote they would only recommend the degree to someone with significant existing financial support. A few commented that in hindsight they wished they had pursued more lucrative professional degrees, such as business or computer science.

Those who referred to personal financial impact in what was perceived to be a positive light usually mentioned salary gains or promotions that came after obtaining the MLIS.

*“If you were to judge an MLS on a strictly monetary ROI [return on investment], no one in their right mind would get one... the only thing keeping libraries going is the sincere love for the job that many of us have.”*



## Perception of the Librarian Profession

Ninety-two comments mentioned the public's perception of the library profession. More than five out of six reflected a negative perception of the profession (86%). These comments were defined as those that discussed the public view of librarians and/or the MLIS.

Many respondents wrote of a general lack of understanding of a librarian's educational background and role in the community. Some comments perceived as negative in this category discussed the low pay of some MLIS graduates as a constant reminder that the public does not have a particularly positive perception of librarians, if they have any perception at all. Some noted a recent rise in staffing paraprofessionals in librarian roles and felt this practice diminishes the value of the degree in the eyes of the public and the eyes of MLIS graduates. According to some respondents, librarians are individually and collectively responsible for promoting their own professional value to the public and have disregarded this responsibility in the past.

*"The perception the degree carries with potential employers, especially public library trustees, is of more value than the practical skills taught in pursuit of the degree."*

The few positive comments in this category mentioned the value of the degree in the eyes of library directors and trustees. These respondents wrote that the degree demonstrated a

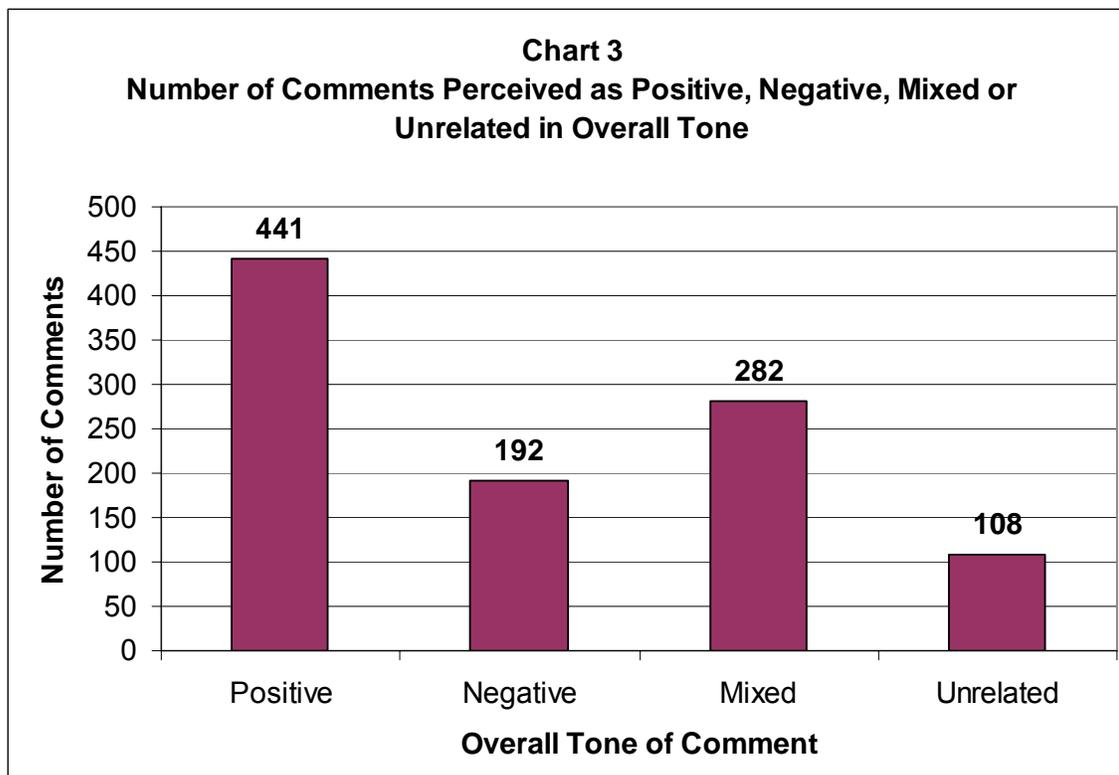
*"I love being a librarian, but I am disappointed that librarians have such a low level of recognition by the community. Unlike teachers, our profile as perceived by the public has never changed. I think that is the main reason that libraries are the first department or institution cut when money tightens up. We need to do a much better job clarifying what we do that helps the community. We do much more and our libraries offer more than people realize. We need to make libraries indispensable to the communities."*

commitment to libraries, life-long learning, communities, and one's own career and education. Only a couple of respondents stated that they felt respected and appreciated by the public.

## Conclusion

In the over 1,000 comments left by respondents, many lauded the degree and profession in one or more categories. About 43 percent of comments had a positive tone only and 28 percent had a "mixed" tone, meaning the comment had both a positive and negative tone. Less than one in 5 respondents (19%) had a negative only comment. (See Chart 3.) Just over 100 comments were not applicable to this analysis and were labeled "unrelated." These comments were either personal comments or too vague to infer meaning.





The positive comments reflected on a love of the profession, the necessity of the MLIS for career advancement, and an overall belief that the MLIS program content provides a fundamental foundation of knowledge to thrive in the profession.

The negative comments acknowledged concern with the job market, post MLIS personal financial impact, and the perception of the profession. These concerns caused hesitation for respondents in recommending the MLIS degree to others. However, many respondents who mentioned negatives also made positive comments in other categories.

There are two sides to the value of an MLIS degree “coin” and it is necessary to examine both the positives and negatives. The comments indicate that librarians clearly value the MLIS degree. At the same time, they have many real-life concerns. Armed with this knowledge, library leaders and library educators can advocate more effectively for librarians and enhance the value of the degree for all.

*“Repeat after me: I will be cognizant of realistic expectations (salary, daily activities, career advancement/opportunities, freebies etc) in my chosen career - libraries or otherwise -my interests and desired location must match supply and demand for a realistic match -a sense of entitlement won't get me a job, much less one I really think I should have -choosing among my options carefully, and with work and some good fortune, will increase my chances of a having a great career I love!”*

#### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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## What I Learned About the Value of an MLIS Degree: An LIS Student's Perspective

ED3/110.10/No. 271

April 20, 2009

*"I am torn between not recommending and recommending pursuing a MLIS degree... While I value my degree and what I have learned, entering the profession has been disappointing and frustrating."*

*"The job market is extremely glutted, while at the same time people outside of the profession are seeing less and less value in paying for a professional librarian. It's a really terrible job market right now, yet ALA and library schools are doing absolutely nothing to address these very serious problems."*

*"The MLIS reflects our earlier vision and mission but may not address the present and future as well as it should."*

After hours of skimming responses to the Library Research Service's MLIS value survey<sup>1</sup>, I suppose a bit of self-doubt was inevitable.

As a student only a few months away from my own MLIS, the stress of exams and projects is gradually being replaced by another, more nebulous anxiety: the fear that I won't be able to find a professional job, especially once the bills for my student loans start showing up in the mailbox. More than that, will the job translate into a rewarding career and a decent lifestyle? Here, directly from the folks in the trenches, were words that spoke to my anxieties, and they weren't exactly comforting.

Discussing it over lunch with another student who was busy analyzing her own survey responses, I was relieved to hear she felt the same way. As with most of our peers, we had not made the decision to attend library school lightly. Despite the promise of rising entry-level salaries, retirements, and plentiful opportunities, we knew we'd have to be good, exceptionally good, to get a foot in the door. It was still sobering to read the words of anonymous librarians who regarded library school as a bad investment or a waste of time.

I took a break from the survey. After the threat of an existential crisis had passed, I thought about the comments in a more objective way. What were the lessons here for students who have signed the promissory notes on their loans and committed to the library field? After all, if 89 percent of the respondents felt their degrees were worth the time and money invested, and if 86 percent would recommend the MLIS degree to someone else, the comments shouldn't necessarily be discouraging.

Here, in no particular order, are the lessons for new professionals that I gleaned from the survey comments.

1. **Have realistic expectations.** Know what kinds of salary you can reasonably expect, what your day-to-day activities will be, what skills you'll need, and what kind of opportunities for advancement may (or may not) present themselves. And no, you will not make as much money as you'd like in your first professional job. As one



respondent put it “Don’t just get a public library reference position and hope to get rich off of it.” Well said.

2. **Be willing to relocate.** Opportunity is tied to geography. In general, the closer you live to a library school, the more competition you’ll face for entry-level positions. It is highly unlikely that you’ll get the perfect job within walking distance of that perfect apartment. The farther you’re willing to go, the more opportunities will present themselves.
3. **Think about your skills in the broader context.** In an information economy, library skills are useful in myriad settings. Think about all the ways you could use your MLIS training outside of the traditional library, including corporate and business environments. Tailor your course plan to prepare you for all types of information work, and don’t neglect the skills you may have developed in earlier incarnations of your career.
4. **Commit to lifelong learning.** Some respondents claimed their library programs didn’t adequately prepare them to work with the technology they were required to master, or that the training was obsolete within a few years of earning the degree. Given how rapidly libraries are changing, the onus is on us to make sure our skills remain current.
5. **Respect paraprofessionals.** Not everyone in Library Land chooses to pursue an MLIS, and many of those who forgo the degree have pretty pragmatic reasons for doing so. The degree does provide valuable theoretical grounding, but considering how much all of us actually learn on the job, lack of an MLIS shouldn’t necessarily negate years of library experience.
6. **Your degree has as much value as you give it.** Most professions are vulnerable to the forces of burnout, and librarianship is no exception. No, libraries and librarians are not always as well-respected as they should be. But if we respect ourselves and value our skills, it really shouldn’t matter when an acquaintance is baffled by the need for an advanced degree. If you’re lucky enough to have had a rewarding educational experience and a career you enjoy (most of the time, anyway), then the degree was probably worth it.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the findings from the “60-Second Survey: The Value of an MLIS to You” see Fast Facts nos. 269 & 270.



# Out for Life: Restorative Librarianship In the Colorado Department of Corrections

ED3/110.10/No. 272

May 28, 2009

A 2008 article in *Public Libraries* makes the case that there is “no greater need [for library services] than in the lives of incarcerated community members”<sup>1</sup>. While the focus of the article is on the role of librarianship in juvenile detention centers, it can be contended that adults in correctional facilities have many of the same needs as their juvenile counterparts, including the need for accountability, competency development, technology instruction, and educational opportunities, all of which contribute to successful reintegration into larger society.

Colorado taxpayers spend \$28,759 per inmate per year<sup>2</sup> to house 14,662 state prisoners in its prisons<sup>3</sup>. That’s an annual price tag of over 420 million dollars. With half of all prisoners returning to prison within three years, recidivism reduction has become a statewide priority.

Per Colorado Statute<sup>4</sup>, the Colorado State Library’s Institutional Library Development (ILD) unit oversees 23 libraries in the state’s 22 adult correctional facilities. As part of its

*83% of respondents indicated that the prison library assisted in the acquisition of Life Skills.*

commitment to reduce recidivism, the ILD unit received a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to create “Out for Life.” Designed to promote libraries’ role in helping prisoners successfully reenter society, this grant allowed for the purchase of library materials in subject areas

that demonstrably reduce recidivism, including job seeking, finding affordable housing, budgeting, addiction recovery, mental health, and recreation.

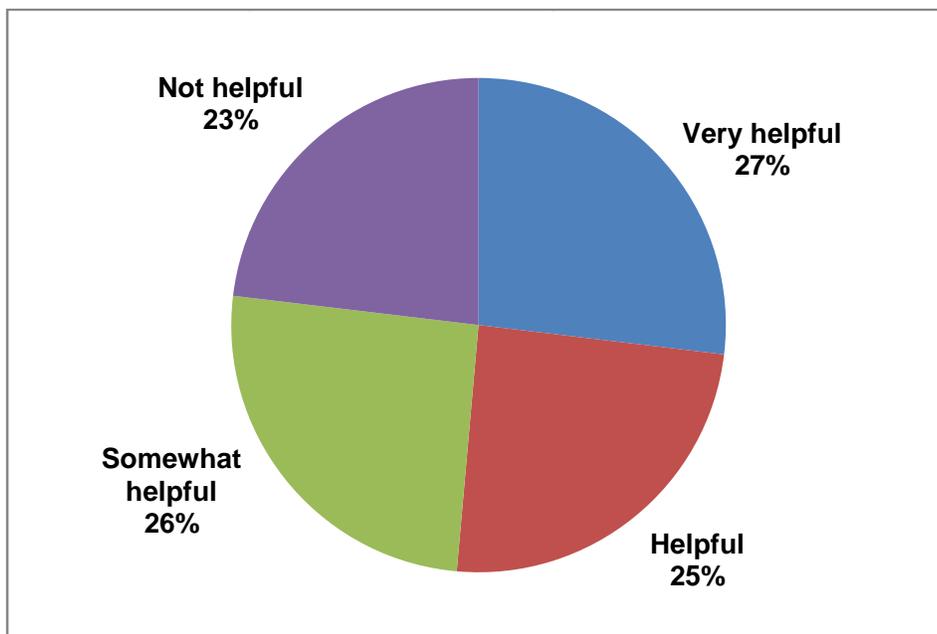
In cooperation with prison library staff, ILD selected similar materials for each prison library in print and non-print formats and in Spanish and English. Staff at each facility library designed and implemented their own library programs.

To measure the overall success of the grant-funded programs, a survey was administered pre- and post-program to inmates at all but one facility, Delta Correctional Center. 3,551 responses were collected, 2,507 pre-program and 1,044 post-program. Responses were compared across facility security levels ranging from Level 1 - the lowest security level – to Level V, the highest. Of the respondents, 89 percent of were male and 11 percent female. While 97 percent of respondents took the survey in English, only 3 percent took it in Spanish.

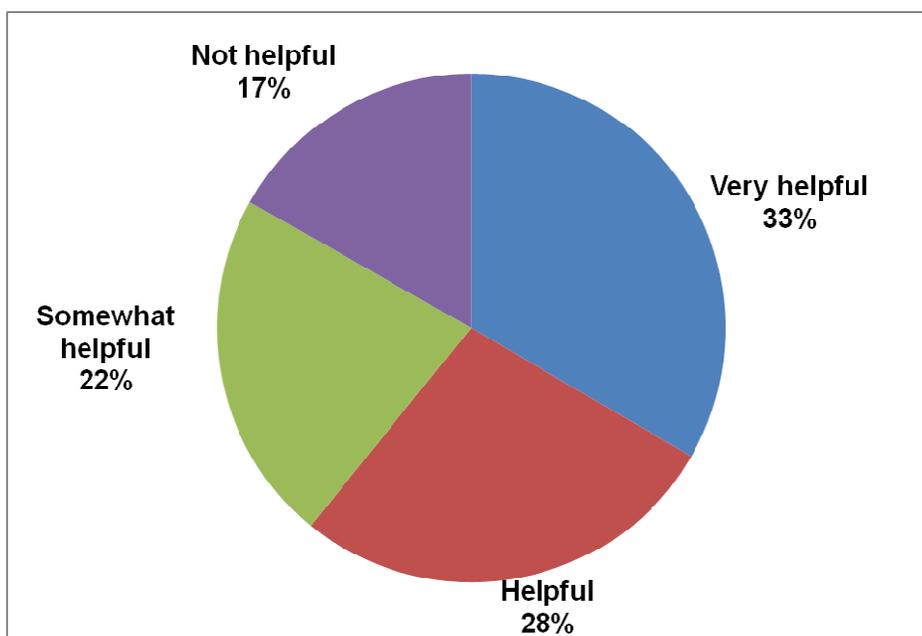
## Overview of Results

Individuals who responded after the Out for Life program had been administered in their facilities cited a higher level of helpfulness of the prison library than those who responded before administration of the program (see Charts 1 and 2). Nearly nine out of ten (88.6%) respondents reported that they had used the prison library. Notably, in facilities where Out for Life had been administered, a greater percentage of respondents reported using the library to help with the re-entry process. Only 9.8 percent of respondents from post-program facilities reported not using the library, compared with 12.0 percent for pre-program facilities.



**Chart 1: Helpfulness of the Prison Library - Pre-Program Respondents**


A higher percentage of those who responded after their facilities had completed the program said that the prison library was at least somewhat helpful in preparing them for re-entry, increasing to 83 percent from 77 percent. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who described the prison library as “very helpful” increased from 26 percent at pre-program facilities to 33 percent at post-program facilities.

**Chart 2: Helpfulness of the Prison Library - Post-Program Respondents**


Overall, 83 percent of those surveyed after program implementation said that the prison library was at least somewhat helpful in preparing for re-entry, up from 77 percent prior to program implementation. Additionally, 83 percent of all respondents indicated that the prison library assisted in the acquisition of one or more “Life Skills”, which for the purpose of the program included skills related to obtaining employment, public transportation, health care, addiction recovery, mental health services, and education,<sup>5</sup> as well as managing anger and setting goals.

A further breakdown of the responses highlights areas in which the program was most successful (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Out for Life  
Outcomes for Respondents Pre-and Post-Program**

The Prison Library has helped me to ...	Pre-program	Post-program	Difference
Identify the most useful public library resources and programs	28.4%	33.3%	+4.9%
Identify the most useful prison library resources and programs	32.1%	36.9%	+4.8%
Create a re-entry plan	23.5%	27.8%	+4.3%
Prepare for post-release use of a public library	22.4%	25.7%	+3.3%
Do research for classroom assignments	32.5%	35.5%	+3.0%
Prepare for post-release use of a college or university library	17.3%	18.6%	+1.3%

(Note: Excludes those who reported that they did not use the library)

### Summary and Conclusions

Prison libraries in Colorado are actively engaged in attempting to improve the lives of their constituents, and specifically in helping to ease the re-entry process. This is evidenced by the high levels of satisfaction with the prison library reported by respondents to this survey.

Project Director Diane Walden indicated that the overarching purpose of the Out for Life project was to “provide materials and programs ...to support the successful reintegration of Colorado Department of Corrections inmates”<sup>5</sup>. While her final report suggests that much remains to be done in order to achieve the project goals, statistical analysis has demonstrated that the project can be deemed a success for many participants, and that inmates in Colorado’s correctional facilities are using library programs and resources in order to aid them in successful reentry.



- <sup>1</sup> Gilman, I. (2008). Beyond books: Restorative librarianship in juvenile detention centers. *Public Libraries*, 47, 1, 59-66.
- <sup>2</sup> Rosten, Kristi L. (2008). Colorado Department of Corrections Statistical Report Fiscal year 2007, p28. [https://exdoc.state.co.us/secure/combo2.0.0/userfiles/folder\\_18/StatRpt2007.pdf](https://exdoc.state.co.us/secure/combo2.0.0/userfiles/folder_18/StatRpt2007.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Report January 2009. [https://exdoc.state.co.us/secure/combo2.0.0/userfiles/folder\\_15/Current.pdf](https://exdoc.state.co.us/secure/combo2.0.0/userfiles/folder_15/Current.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Colorado Revised Statute 24-90-105. <http://www.michie.com/colorado/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp>
- <sup>5</sup> Walden, Diane (2007). Final report: FY 2006 – 2007 LSTA Grants. Available through the Colorado State Library Institutional Library Services.

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# Colorado Libraries Return on Investment: 5 to 1

ED3/110.10/No. 273

June 10, 2009

It's no secret that public libraries provide essential services to their patrons and are important resources for their communities. Intrinsic values are easy to understand, but actual values can be difficult to quantify. For every dollar spent on public libraries in Colorado, how much is returned to the community? Approximately \$5 – according to a study conducted by the Library Research Service (LRS).

The LRS report, *Public Libraries – A Wise Investment: A Return on Investment Study of Colorado Libraries* details the results of a study utilizing a multiple case study approach to quantify the return on investment (ROI) to taxpayers for eight public libraries in Colorado. These libraries represented geographically, economically, and demographically diverse regions of state, and included three large Front Range libraries (Denver Public Library, Douglas County Libraries, and Rangeview Library District); three in mountain communities (Montrose Library District, Eagle Valley Library District, and Cortez Public Library); one on the Western Slope (Mesa County Public Library District); and one on the Eastern Plains (Fort Morgan Public Library).

Usage patterns for these libraries varied as much as the libraries themselves. (See Table 1.)

**Table 1**  
**Selected Characteristics of Public Libraries Used in Return on Investment Study, 2006**

Library	Legal Service Area (LSA) Population	Annual Circulation per Capita	Annual Visits per Capita	Library Program Attendees per 1,000 Served	Public Access Computers per 1,000 Served
<b>Cortez Public Library</b>	8,757	16.3	21.6	178	1.17
<b>Denver Public Library</b>	580,223	16.2	6.6	657	0.92
<b>Douglas County Libraries</b>	265,470	21.8	6.5	446	0.38
<b>Eagle Valley Library District</b>	41,593	9.3	8.6	698	1.05
<b>Fort Morgan Public Library</b>	10,899	9.4	9	388	0.64
<b>Mesa County Public Library District</b>	135,468	5.9	3.8	334	0.37
<b>Montrose Library District</b>	38,150	6.8	5.9	212	0.24
<b>Rangeview Library District</b>	311,290	2.3	1.9	75	0.13

Note: Data is from the 2006 Public Library Annual Report, available at [www.lrs.org](http://www.lrs.org).

## Assigning values

LRS utilized survey questionnaires filled out by almost 5,000 Colorado residents, a library survey, and existing data sources to determine how much – in dollars – libraries contribute to their communities. To identify library services or functions to which dollar values could be easily assigned, LRS looked at ROI studies completed in other states for guidance. Several different numbers were considered together in calculating final returns. These values included:



- “Cost to use alternatives” – Cost to patrons to acquire information or materials from an alternative source if the library did not exist
- “Lost use” – Direct benefit patrons who chose not to seek information elsewhere would lose if the library did not exist
- Local expenditures – What the library spends on goods and services in its community
- Lost staff compensation – Salaries and wages that would not be paid without the library
- “Halo spending” – Purchases made by patrons at businesses near the library when they visit

For more information on the methodology used in this study, see the full report at [www.lrs.org/documents/closer\\_look/roi.pdf](http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/roi.pdf).

### Results

For most of the libraries in the study, the ROI was approximately five to one; for every dollar spent on the library, about five dollars of value was realized by taxpayers. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2**  
**Return on Investment Per Dollar for Participating Libraries**

Library	ROI
Cortez Public Library	\$31.07
Fort Morgan Public Library	\$8.80
Montrose Library District	\$5.33
Douglas County Libraries	\$5.02
Denver Public Library	\$4.96
Rangeview Library District	\$4.81
Mesa County Public Library District	\$4.57
Eagle Valley Library District	\$4.28
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>\$4.99</b>

### Why so different?

As Table 2 illustrates, the ROI for the Cortez Public Library (\$31.02 per \$1.00) vastly exceeded the median, while the ROI for the Fort Morgan Public Library exceeded the median slightly (\$8.80 per dollar). In these libraries, the discrepancy between who funds the libraries (municipalities) and who uses them (county residents) accounts for much of the difference in ROI. For a more detailed explanation, see the individual ROI reports for Cortez Public Library and Fort Morgan Public Library, available at [www.lrs.org/public/roi](http://www.lrs.org/public/roi).



### Determining personal ROI

As part of this study, LRS created an interactive return on investment calculator that patrons of public libraries in Colorado can use to determine a personal return on their investment as taxpayers. The calculator (available at [www.lrs.org/public/roi/usercalculator.php](http://www.lrs.org/public/roi/usercalculator.php)) assigns a dollar value to a single use of a particular library service. Individual returns on investment are based on the number of times the individual reports using each service per month and the typical annual tax contribution for the selected public library.

### Using ROI

Return on investment studies can be valuable for public relations campaigns and budget discussions, as they detail how libraries benefit their communities in a dollars-and-cents way. While understanding the ROI value of libraries can be useful and important, it is equally important to remember that there are other dimensions of library value. True returns on taxpayer investments in public libraries include intangible benefits that are nearly impossible to quantify, such as the sense of community and lifelong learning that libraries help foster. It is important to keep asking patrons how they benefit and to communicate these values to patrons and stakeholders.

**For more information on the LRS return on investment study, including individual reports for the participating libraries, ROI calculators, and related articles, information, and resources, visit [www.lrs.org/public/roi](http://www.lrs.org/public/roi).**

### References

*Colorado Public Library Annual Report, 2007*. (2007). Compiled by Library Research Service. Retrieved May 8, 2009, from [www.lrs.org](http://www.lrs.org).

Library Research Service. *Individual Return on Investment Calculator*. 18 April 2008. 8 May 2009 <http://www.lrs.org/public/roi/usercalculator.php>

Steffen, Nicolle, et al. *Public Libraries – A Wise Investment: A Return on Investment Study of Colorado Libraries*. (2009). Library Research Service. Retrieved May 8, 2009, from [www.lrs.org](http://www.lrs.org).

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# Patrons Continue to Love CTBL Service

ED3/110.10/No. 274

July 22, 2009

The Colorado Talking Book Library's (CTBL) third patron satisfaction and outcome survey was administered in 2008. It is clear from the survey results and the comments left by respondents that the overwhelming majority of patrons are very pleased with CTBL service. Overall satisfaction is exceptionally high – nearly all respondents (99%) rated CTBL as excellent or good (see Chart 1).

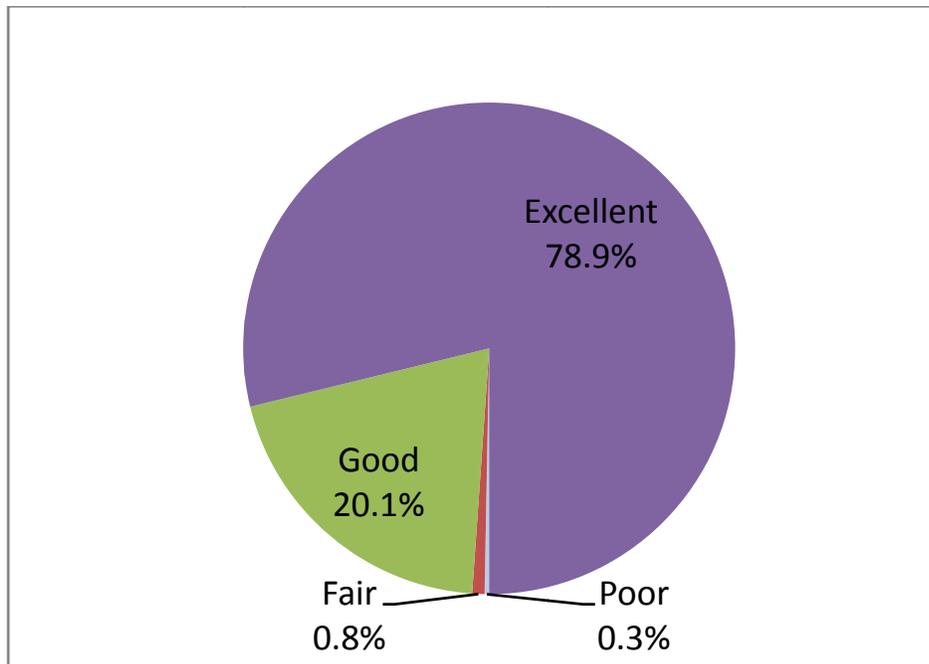
## About CTBL

The Colorado Talking Book Library (CTBL) serves, at no cost to the user, over 13,000 patrons who, due to physical, visual, or learning disabilities, are unable to read standard print material.

CTBL's collection consists of 56,000 talking books, 5,000 titles in Braille, 14,000 titles in large print, and about 300 descriptive videos.

CTBL is part of the Colorado State Library, a division of the Colorado Department of Education and is affiliated with the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS).

**Chart 1**  
**Respondents Overall Satisfaction with CTBL**



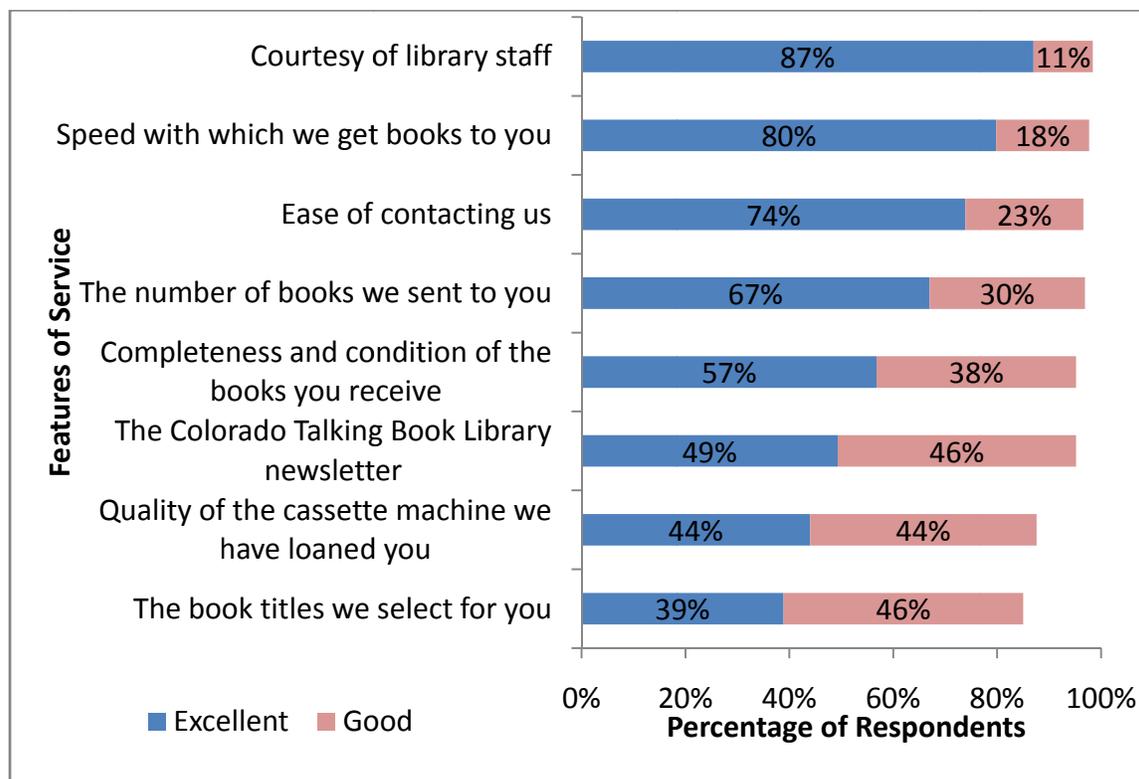
## Features of CTBL Service

In addition to rating overall satisfaction with CTBL, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with selected features of CTBL service. Features were generally rated very well. The features that received the highest rankings were courtesy of library staff and speed with which books are delivered, both with 98 percent rated as excellent or good (see Chart 2). Even the two lowest rated service features - quality of the cassette machine and the book titles selected - still received very high ratings, with almost nine out of ten respondents indicating a good or excellent rating.

### CTBL Services

- Books may be ordered via mail, email, phone, fax, or online.
- The library loans the cassette playback machines free of charge to its patrons.
- Patrons can request specific titles or books can be selected for them based on their reading interests.

**Chart 2**  
**Percentage of Respondents Rating Selected Features of CTBL Service as Excellent or Good**



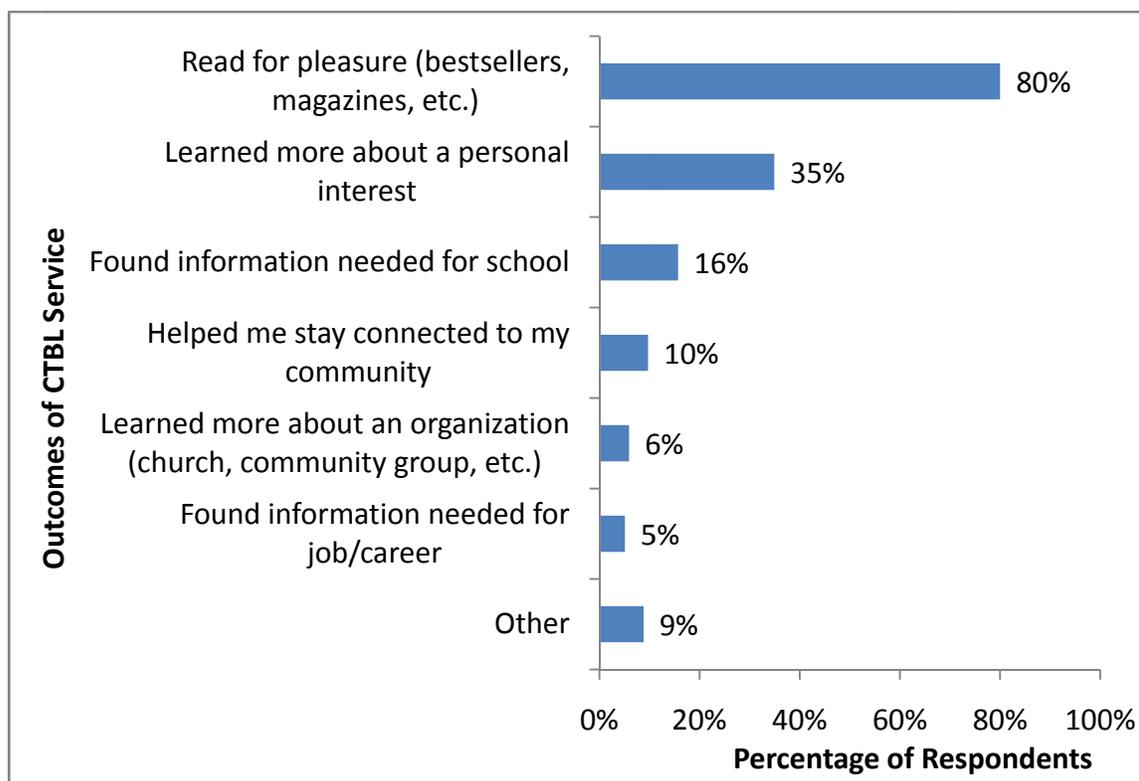
## Outcomes of CTBL Use

The survey also asked respondents how CTBL has been valuable to them. Reading for pleasure was by far the most frequently selected outcome of CTBL, with eight out of ten respondents citing that as valuable (see Chart 3). The next most valued outcome of CTBL use, with more than one in three respondents

selecting it, was learning more about a personal interest. About one in six found information needed for school and one in ten stayed connected to their community.

*"Mom will soon be 93. These books keep her mind alert, and provide entertainment for some of her long hours. They have been a "godsend" thank you for the independence you have given my mom."*

**Chart 3**  
**Percentage of Respondents Indicating Selected Outcomes of CTBL Services**



Note: Respondents could select more than one outcome.

*"Losing my ability to read has been an extremely difficult adjustment for me. The CTBL helps me connect to my world, stay current on new information, and gives me hope to continue learning throughout my life. Thank you for all you do."*



## What's changed?

Results of the 2008 CTBL patron satisfaction survey were very similar to the previous two surveys in 2004 and 2006. Most satisfaction ratings varied only slightly from previous years with respondents indicating high satisfaction levels. This was also true of the most frequently selected outcomes of CTBL service. However, there were a few exceptions.

In 2008, the CTBL newsletter received a combined rating of excellent and good from 95 percent of survey respondents. This was similar in 2006, with 94 percent rating the newsletter positively. These ratings were greatly improved from 2004, when only 74 percent rated the newsletter as excellent or good. When asked about the increased patron satisfaction, Debbi MacLeod commented that in 2004, when she became CTBL's director, she revamped the newsletter. Some of the changes included featuring new books (e.g. large print or locally recorded books) and information about products and events of interest to CTBL patrons. Ms. MacLeod said, "These changes have jazzed up the contents, made it more interesting and useful to our patrons, and don't forget the readability factor. It's also available in alternate formats, which is becoming more widely known and helps patrons who can't read the large print."

The quality of the cassette machine loaned to the patrons was also rated differently in 2008. Combined ratings of excellent and good dropped from 96 percent and 94 percent in 2004 and 2006, respectively, to 88 percent in 2008. The decrease in ratings is possibly due to the cassette machines aging. This problem is being addressed statewide and nationally with the adoption of a new digital talking book player, which will be distributed to patrons starting in fall 2009.

### Digital Talking Book Players

The new digital talking book player will be about the size of a cassette and will weigh almost five pounds less than the traditional talking book player.



Benefits of CTBL use, according to respondents, have also been quite similar each year, with one notable difference. In 2008, 16 percent of respondents indicated finding information needed for school was a valued outcome (see Chart 3). This is about twice the percentage of previous year's surveys (9% in 2004 and 7% in 2006). This

*"Continue with the great work you do, this service has really helped me with my school work. Thank you."*

Fast Facts – Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service

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increase could be due to a change in 2008's survey administration, when more school aged patrons received the survey than in years prior<sup>1</sup>.

### Conclusion

Clearly, the vast majority of patrons are satisfied with CTBL service. Nearly all respondents rate their overall satisfaction with CTBL and individual service features extremely high. In addition to high ratings, the comments received from survey respondents reflect how much CTBL means to its patrons. Patrons appreciate CTBL for keeping them informed, entertained, and connected to their communities.

*"I look forward to Fridays when I usually receive a new selection of books. My life is so much more pleasurable with the books as reading has always been a high priority for me. Special requests are sent to me very promptly, staff have always been helpful and pleasant. I really do not think I could do without you people and the services you provide."*

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<sup>1</sup> Patrons were selected to receive the survey from a stratified sample by age group to better represent CTBL's patron population as a whole. This was successful, as the respondents' age closely matched the age groups of CTBL patrons overall.



# Library Jobs in Colorado: What Does LibraryJobline.org Tell Us?

ED3/110.10/No. 275

July 24, 2009

In 2009, LibraryJobline.org began its third year of data collection<sup>1</sup>. This Fast Facts examines and compares the data from job postings in 2007 and 2008 (Jobline's first and second year), as well as the number of job postings by month in 2009, at the time of this writing.

## Number of Job Postings 2007-2009

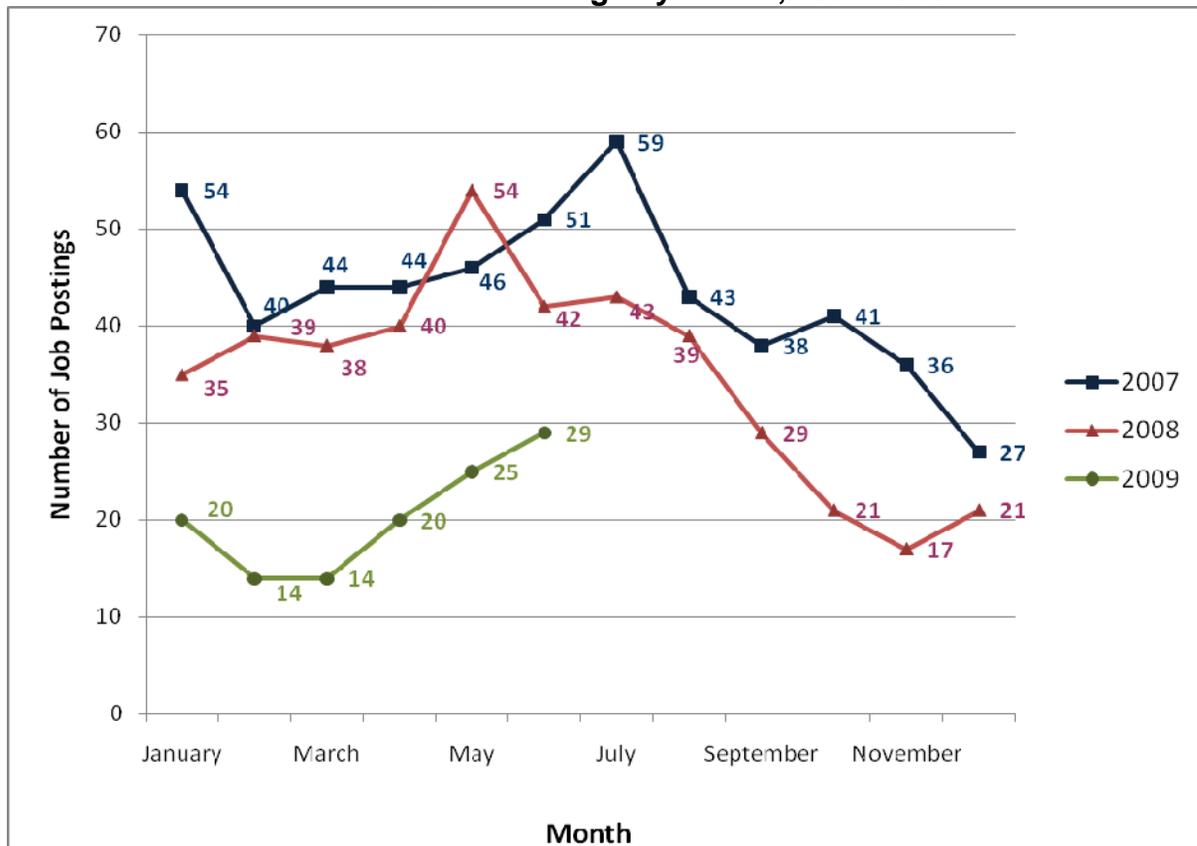
Due to the current economic recession, it is not surprising that job postings have recently decreased. The number of jobs posted in 2008 was down 20 percent from 2007 (see Chart 1).

### LibraryJobline.org

Since 2007:

- Over 1,300 positions have been posted
- Over 1,200 people have signed up for MyJobline accounts
- More than two out of three registered users receive email notifications
- One out of three registered users subscribe to Jobline's RSS notifications

**Chart 1**  
**Number of Job Postings by Month, 2007-2009**



<sup>1</sup> When the Library Research Service (LRS) took over the administration of LibraryJobline.org in January of 2007, they transferred it from the previous static website to one that is database-backed. This change gave LRS the ability to collect and analyze the information about the job postings received.

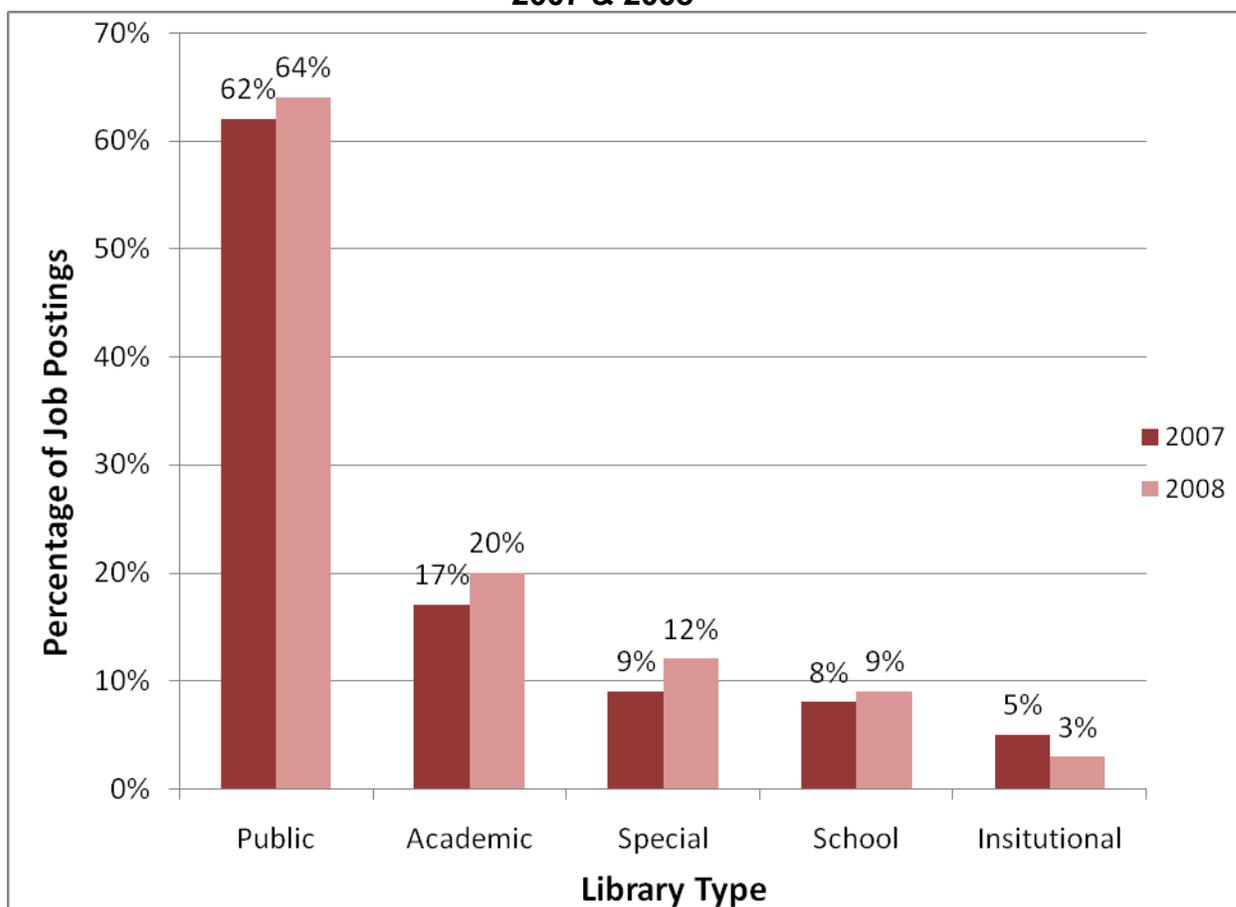


However, a sharp decline did not begin until September 2008. Prior to that, the number of job postings fluctuated, but overall, was similar to 2007. So far in 2009, postings have decreased even more. In February and March 2009, Library Jobline received the fewest number of postings yet for a single month. This may improve, as job postings have been seasonal in the past, with monthly totals peaking between May and August and lessening at the end of the year. As of June 2009, this trend does appear to continue as job postings *have* increased. However, despite the increase since March 2009, the monthly totals are still less than half of what they were in 2007 and 2008.

### Job Postings by Library Type

The percentage of job postings by library type for 2008 changed very little from 2007 (see Chart 2). The minimal change indicates that all library sectors are affected by the decrease in job postings. As in 2007, well over half of the job postings were for public libraries (64%) and academic library job postings (20%) were a distant second.

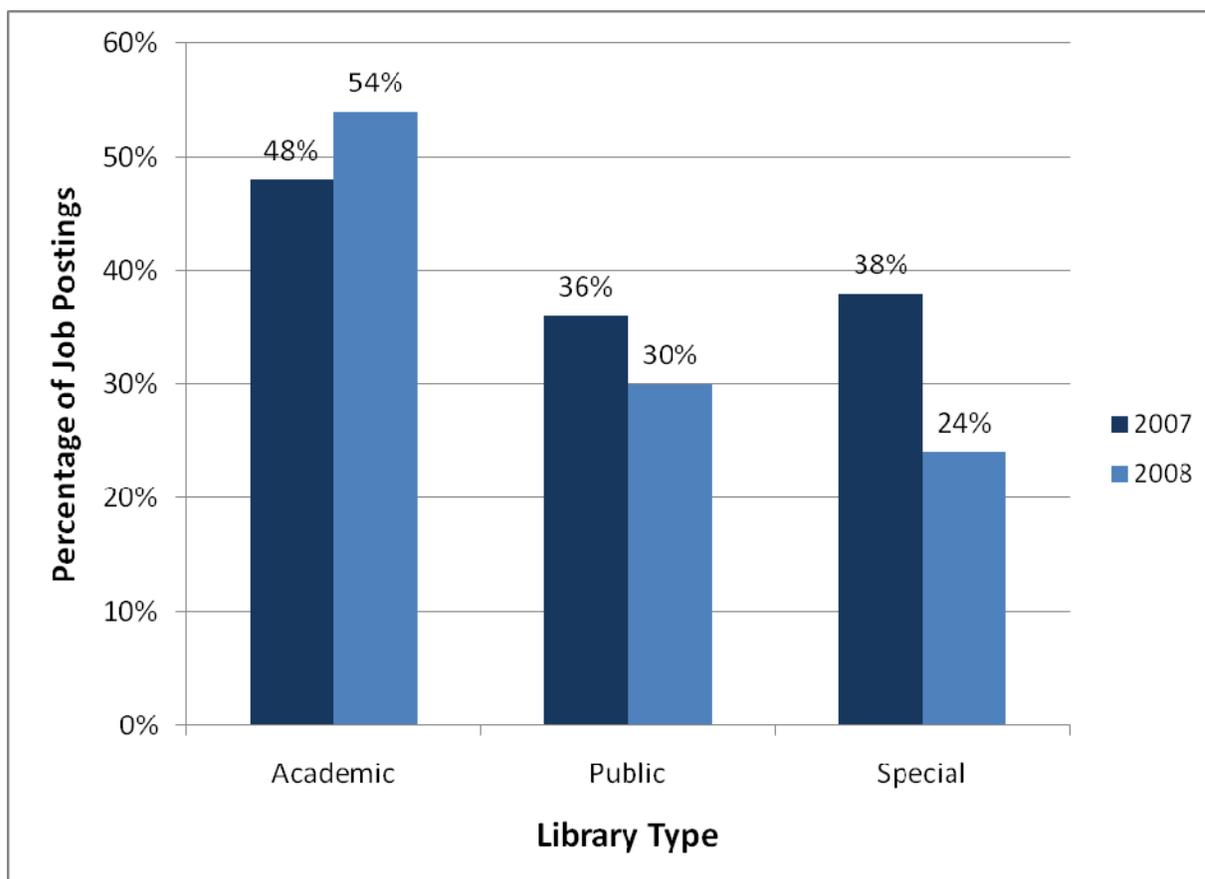
**Chart 2**  
**Percentage of Total Job Postings by Library Type**  
**2007 & 2008**



## Degree Requirements

The percentage of all jobs posted that required an ALA-accredited MLIS degree was, again, very similar in 2007 and 2008. However, among the different library types (academic, public, and special) there was a change between the two years. The percentage of postings requiring an ALA-MLIS degree decreased for all library types, *except* academic (see Chart 3). In 2008, the ALA-MLIS degree was required for 54 percent of positions posted by academic libraries, an increase of six percentage points from 2007. Public libraries had a slight decrease in MLIS requirements for jobs posted, which went from 36 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2008. Special libraries had the biggest change with job postings requiring the MLIS decreasing from 38 percent in 2007 to 24 percent in 2008.

**Chart 3**  
**Percentage of Positions Posted Requiring ALA-MLIS Degree by Library Type**  
**2007 & 2008**



Note: School libraries are excluded from this chart because degree requirements and credentials (i.e. school library endorsement) for librarian positions are often different from other library types.



## Reason for Position Openings

When posting a job to LibraryJobline.org, employers are asked to identify the reason for the job opening. Possible responses are resignation, new position, promotion, or retirement. Resignations were the reason for nearly half (45%) of 2008's posted positions. Almost one in four (24%) positions posted were new positions. The percentage of jobs posted due to promotions or retirements was the same in 2008 (each 15%). Overall, the distribution of reasons for position openings in 2008 was almost identical to 2007. The largest changes seen between the two years were a slight increase (3%) in retirements, and a similar decrease (3%) in promotions, resulting in a position posted to LibraryJobline.org.

## Hot Jobs

So far in 2009, the most frequently viewed job has been a posting for a Teacher-Librarian position with Denver Public Schools. The posting has had 4,181 views to date. The most frequently viewed posting in 2008 was another Teacher-Librarian position with Denver Public Schools, which had 4,330 views. The percentage of school library job postings is so few (only nine percent of the positions posted to Library Jobline are from school libraries, as seen in Chart 2), that when these positions do appear, they are heavily viewed. In addition, these position listings often include multiple job openings, which may further explain the large number of views for these postings. The most recent hot jobs can always be viewed at <http://www.LibraryJobline.org/stats/hotposts.php>.



## Conclusion

The most substantial change during LibraryJobline.org's second year was the decrease in positions posted, going from 520 in 2007 to 418 in 2008. The economic recession is undoubtedly the main cause for much of this decline. As we move forward LibraryJobline.org will likely continue to reflect the general health of the economy. Although the number of positions posted is lower, the number of users is increasing as more people search for jobs. The total number of visits to LibraryJobline.org in April 2009 (17,155) increased by more than 2,000 from April 2008 (14,932), despite the fact that the number of job postings was less than half. It will be interesting to see how time and different economic conditions affect the positions posted on LibraryJobline.org. Stay tuned.

### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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# User Satisfaction with AskColorado Continues

ED3/110.10/No. 276

August 12, 2009

Most users of AskColorado, the statewide 24/7 free virtual reference service, continue to report being satisfied with the service, according to a user satisfaction survey conducted by the Library Research Service (LRS).

In the fall of 2008, 1,335 AskColorado users completed a pop-up survey after their virtual reference transaction. The survey asked users how helpful they found the virtual librarian, how satisfied they were with the answer to their question, and how likely they were to use AskColorado again.

The results indicate users are pleased with the service. Nearly three out of four users (74%) said the virtual librarian they worked with was extremely helpful or helpful, while 72 percent indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the answer to their question. Most respondents (83%) said they were very likely or likely to use AskColorado again (see Chart 1). In addition, comments left by users often reflected their satisfaction. Many said they were impressed with the service and grateful for the help they received.

*"The librarian I was working with was very helpful even though my subject was broad, and she found exactly what I was looking for. This site is wonderful. Thank you."*

## Virtual Reference: Colorado and the Nation

AskColorado, which marked its fifth full year of service in September 2008, has fielded over a quarter of a million sessions in English and Spanish since its inception. The service is staffed by librarians from 45 libraries throughout the state and 75 libraries in Colorado support AskColorado by providing monetary contributions and/or staffing. Thanks in large part to this service, 53% of public libraries in Colorado offer chat or instant-message reference service, compared with 22% of public libraries nationwide.<sup>1</sup>



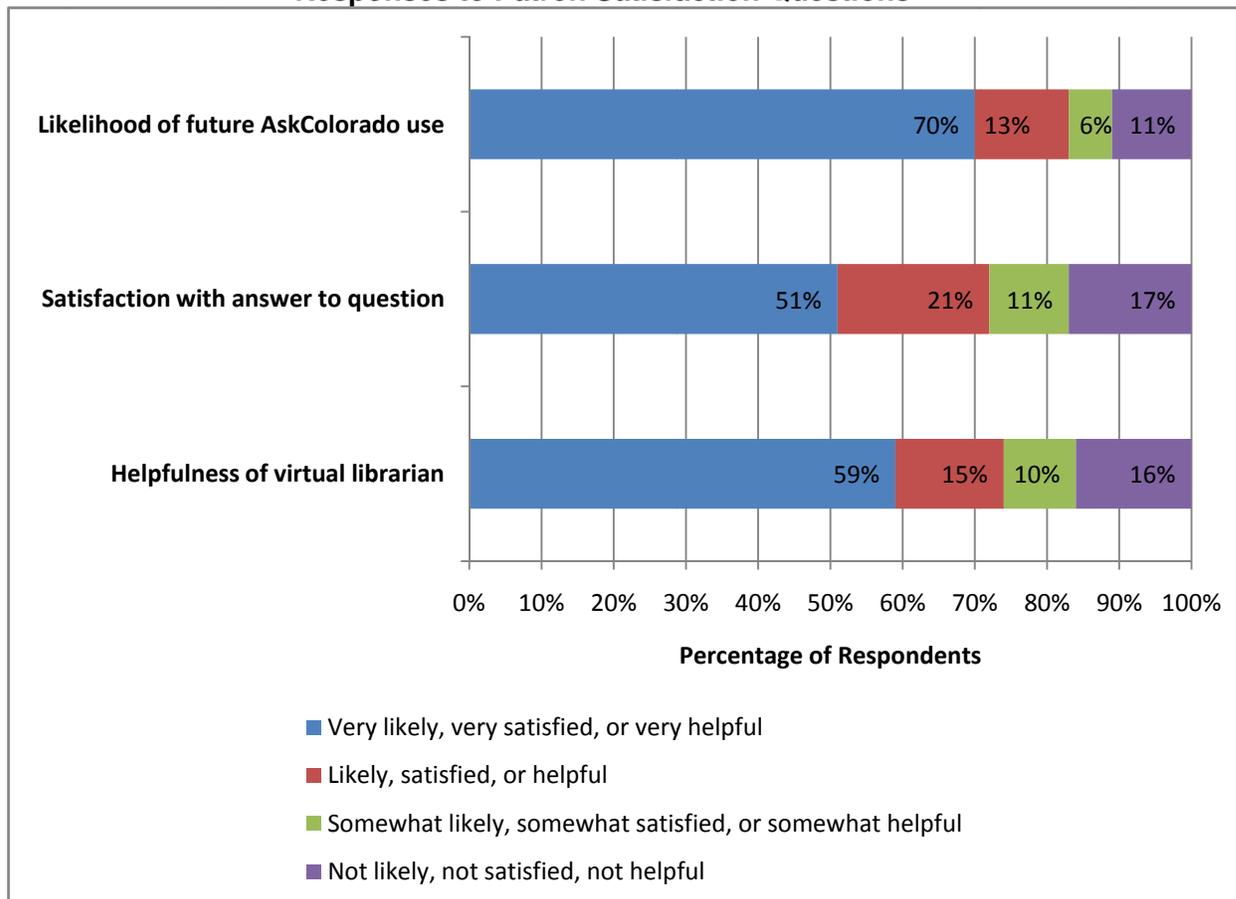
## Usage Trends



AskColorado fielded 39,870 sessions in 2008, which is lower than 2007's total of 61,670. The reason for this decrease is due to the discontinuation of one "queue" that in 2007 generated 14,425 sessions. That queue, known as CoGov, was a pilot project between AskColorado and the web providers for the State of Colorado website. The pilot project was discontinued Jan. 1, 2008. Decreased traffic from the CoGov queue, in addition to technical logistics related to the discontinuation, resulted in lower total numbers for 2008. Although the total number of sessions was down, use by Spanish speakers grew. The number of sessions fielded in Spanish increased during 2008, from 329 in 2007 (an average of about one sessions per day) to 591 in 2008 (an average of almost two sessions per day).



**Chart 1**  
**2008 AskColorado User Survey**  
**Responses to Patron Satisfaction Questions**



User satisfaction with the service appears to be on the rise. In 2008, respondents reported the highest levels of satisfaction for all three satisfaction questions in the four years the survey has been administered. More respondents reported being “very satisfied” with the answer to their question than in previous years (from 43% in 2005 to 51% in 2008) and the percentage of respondents who indicate future use is “very likely” has increased each year the survey asked the question, from 61 percent in 2005 to 70 percent in 2008.

*“The librarian was not only helpful, but very friendly as well. I could tell that she was doing everything she could to help me. Thanks!”*

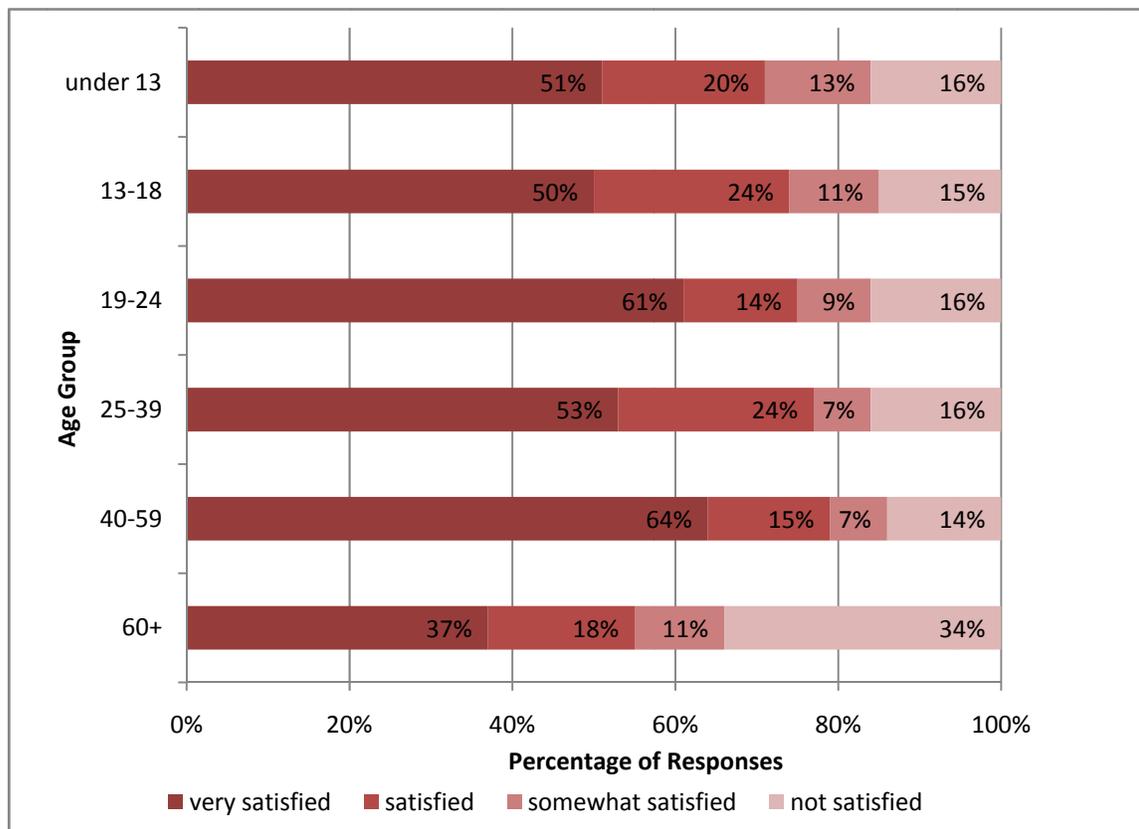
### Generational Divide

When satisfaction levels were compared to respondents’ age, an interesting discrepancy emerged. Respondents ages 60 and older were less likely to rate the service highly in terms of helpfulness and satisfaction. While more than half (53%) of respondents from this age group were satisfied or very satisfied with the answer to their question, one in three said they were not satisfied with the answer to their question – twice the rate of any other age group (see Chart 2). This may reflect a generational difference in respondents’ familiarity



and comfort with instant messaging and virtual reference, among other factors. Although only 5% of survey respondents said they were 60 years or older, this generational divide may merit attention in the future.

**Chart 2**  
**Respondent Satisfaction with Answer to Their Question by Age Group**



### AskColorado and Schoolwork

AskColorado is used by students of all ages. Three out of five respondents (60%) identified themselves as current students; of those, nearly half (45%) are middle school students, although high school and college students are also well represented. (See Chart 3.)

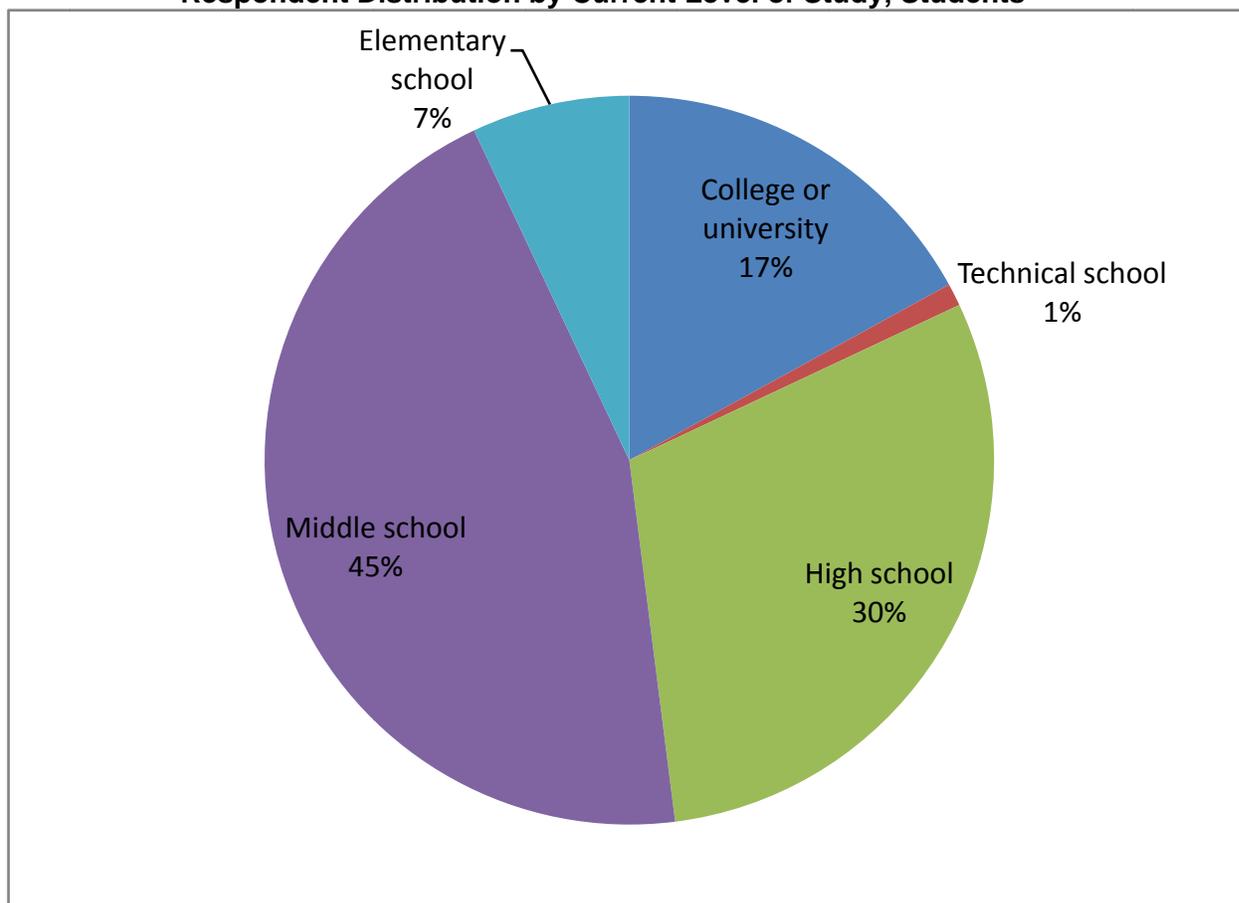
*"I got all my homework done on one trip to this site. I will be recommending this site to all my friends and family."*

### Outcomes

In an effort to determine how and why people are using AskColorado, respondents were asked what they had achieved by using the service. More than half of student respondents (51%) did research for homework or a school project, while two out of five (40%) obtained a specific fact or document. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that AskColorado is a valuable resource for students and plays an important role in supporting education in the state.



**Chart 3**  
**Respondent Distribution by Current Level of Study, Students**



### Conclusion

As the virtual reference model matures, AskColorado continues to improve its services with user satisfaction ratings at record highs in 2008. Use of the service by students at all levels, as well as the outcomes reported by all respondents, indicate that users rely on AskColorado for assistance with schoolwork as well as for answers to traditional reference questions. The results of this survey suggest that AskColorado is providing a valuable resource for Coloradans by offering one-on-one service for patrons 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

*"Thanks for the help, it saved a lot of time searching meaningless websites."*

<sup>1</sup> Lietzau, Z. (2009). *U.S. Public Libraries and the Use of Web Technologies*. Manuscript in preparation

### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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# Libraries and Librarians Feeling Effects of Economic Slowdown

ED3/110.10/No. 277

August 19, 2009

The economic recession's impact on libraries has become a hot topic in recent months. Prompted by editorials and news stories from around the country, the Library Research Service (LRS) undertook our latest 60-Second Survey, "Libraries and the Economic Recession." The goal of this survey was to gather input from librarians in the field about how their libraries and careers have been impacted by the current economic situation. Nearly 500 people working in public, academic, school, and special libraries responded. The results indicate that while public libraries are seeing much of the increase in traffic and library use, employees in all types of libraries are feeling the pressures of the economic recession.

## Increases in Library Use and Requests for Help

The first set of questions asked for respondents' personal observations about increases in requests for assistance and increases in the use of library services.

Computer use was a dominant theme in the responses. When asked if they were helping more patrons with selected library services, 70 percent of respondents said they had noticed an increase in requests for help using computers, while 66 percent reported more requests for assistance with job-seeking activities, such as filling out online applications or resume preparation (see Chart 1). These percentages were even higher among those working at public libraries, with nine out of ten public library employees identifying an increase in requests for assistance with computers and/or job-seeking activities.

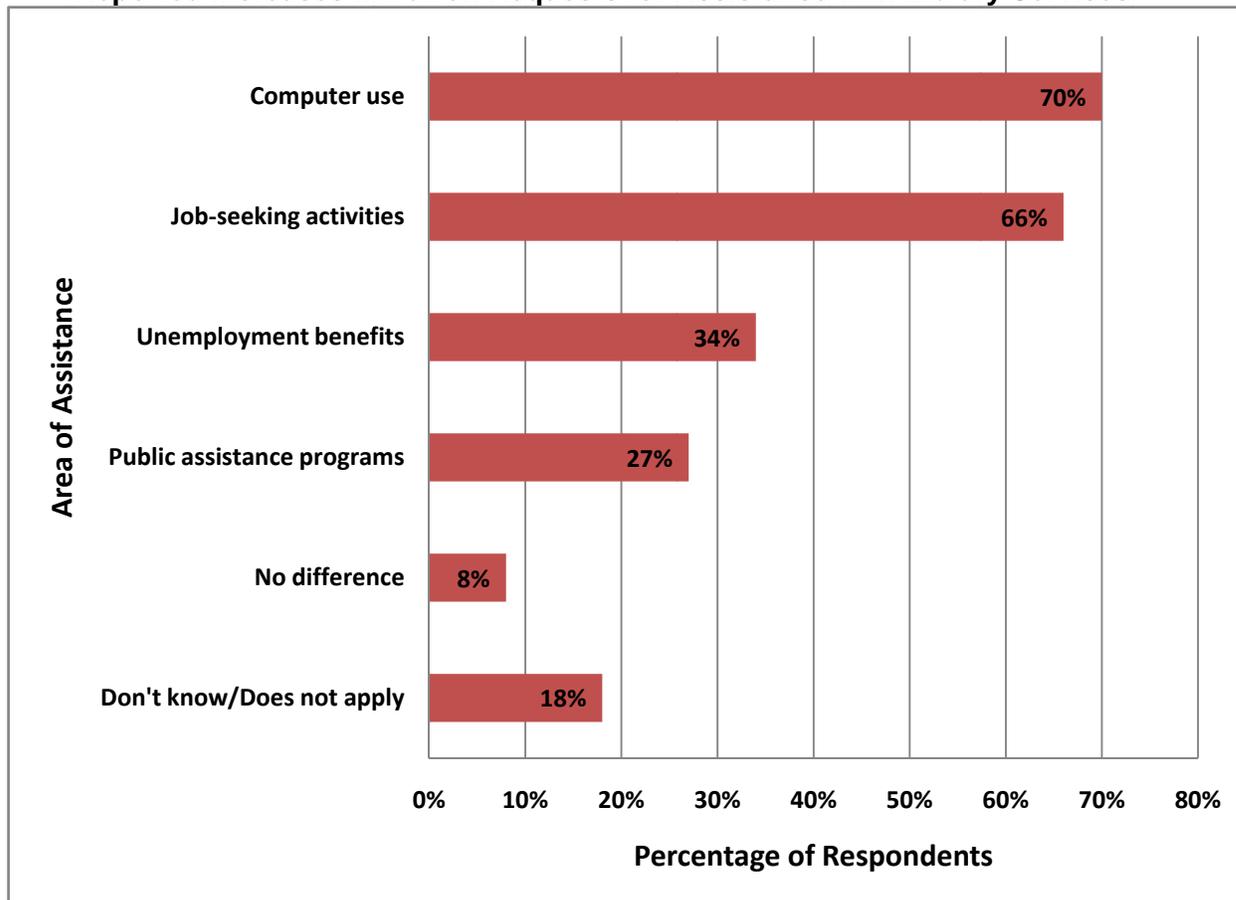
### What is an LRS 60-Second Survey?

In the style of an online readers' poll, the 60-Second Survey format is short and to the point. By definition, the survey can be answered in a minute or less. Narrow by intent, 60-Second Surveys capture the perceptions and knowledge of respondents on a single timely topic. The online surveys are distributed electronically via email, listservs, blogs, etc. Results are reported briefly on the LRS blog and in more detail in Fast Facts.

*"As a librarian in a large urban library system struggling to keep up with the sheer volume of customers needing help with technology, I have experienced the impact of the economic downturn firsthand - in particular with access to technology. Often my staff and I are helping multiple customers with few or no computer skills..."*



**Chart 1**  
**Reported Increases in Patron Requests for Assistance with Library Services**



Note: Chart details responses to the question, "In the last 12 months, have you had to help more patrons with the following services?"

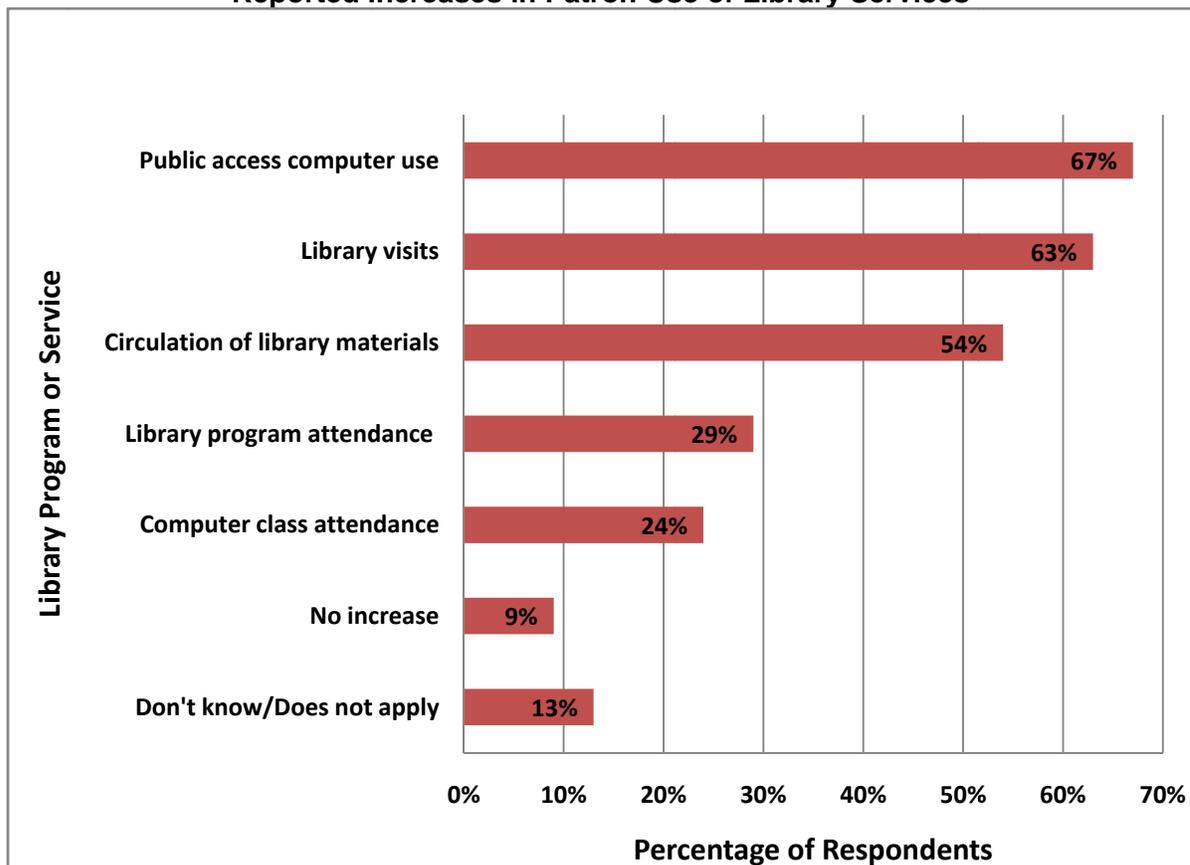
Similarly, when asked whether they had personally noticed an increase in use of selected library resources in the last 12 months, 67 percent reported an increase in the use of public access computers. Sixty-three percent noted an increase in library visits, and 54 percent said they had seen an increase in the circulation of library materials (see Chart 2).

*"Many people have come in to apply for jobs or apply for unemployment benefits that don't know how to use a computer and helping them has been a strain. Also, many people have sad stories to tell and just need someone to listen."*

*"There are more people coming into the library than ever before. We are getting patrons who tell us they didn't know we existed, never needed us before. Now they need us for job information, computers, printers, and public assistance information. Most of our users have never needed public assistance. I have lots of pamphlets and information that I never see anyone take, but it needs [to be] constantly re-stocked. I have also seen an increase in very stressed-out people on the edge. I'm just hoping I still have a job next year."*



**Chart 2**  
**Reported Increases in Patron Use of Library Services**



Note: Chart details responses to the question, "In the last 12 months have you personally noticed an increase in use of the following resources at your library?"

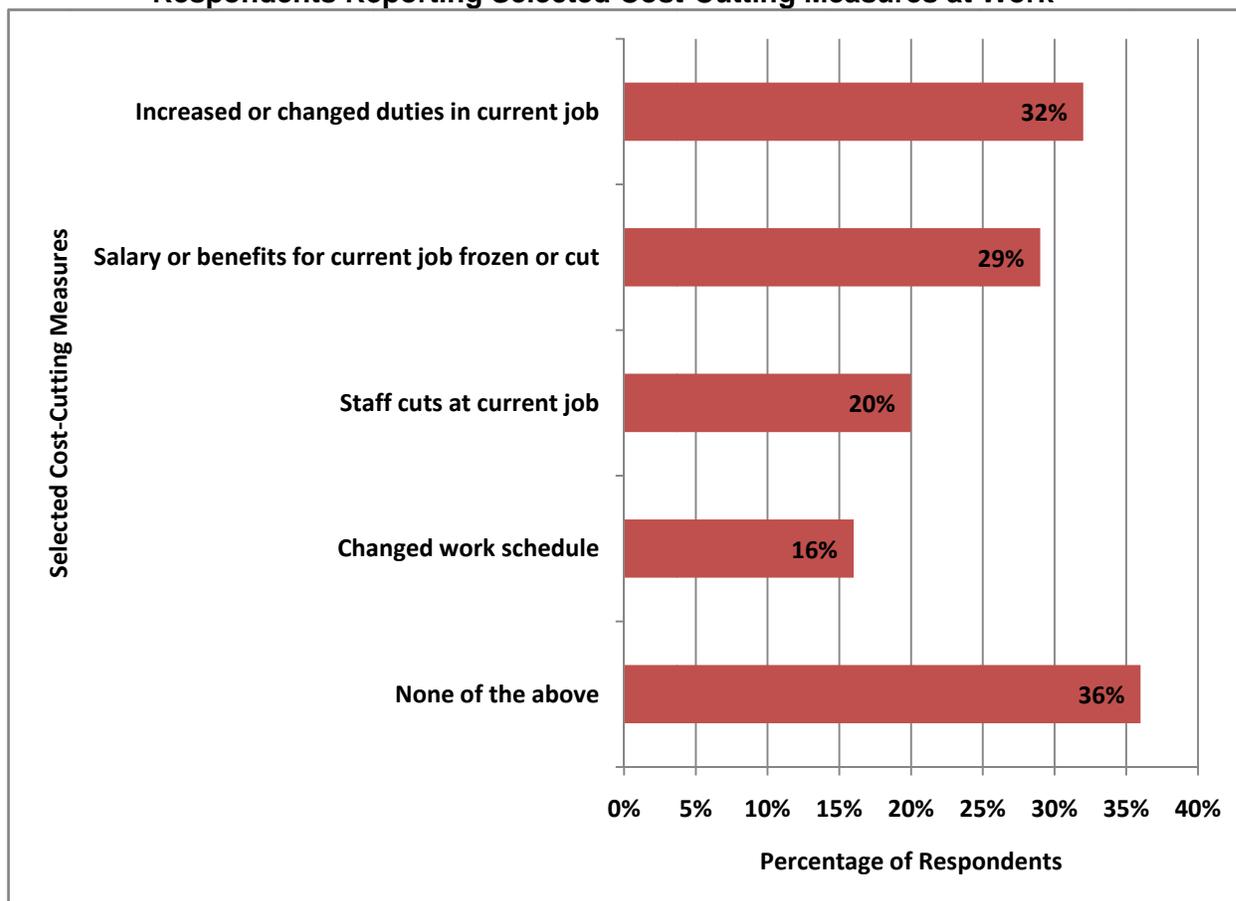
### Impact on Library Jobs

The second set of questions in the survey asked respondents how the economic recession has impacted their jobs. To determine which staff-related cost-cutting measures libraries were taking, the survey asked respondents to identify any cost-cutting measures they had experienced in the last 12 months. The largest percentage (36%) indicated that none of the selected measures had been taken at their library. Nearly one in three (32%) said their job duties had increased or changed in the last 12 months, and almost 30 percent said salaries or benefits in their current job had been frozen or cut (see Chart 3).

*"We are serving people in our community who had never before used any of our services. They are surprised to see how much we have to offer. They did not expect the level of technology, variety of programs, or the up-to-date collection to be available in their hometown public library."*



**Chart 3**  
**Respondents Reporting Selected Cost-Cutting Measures at Work**



Note: Chart details responses to the question, "Which, if any, of the following has happened to you in the last 12 months?"

*"Not only are we seeing an increase in overall visitors, we notice an increase in highly educated people with very limited library skills. Upper middle class new users who are making the decision to use "prepaid" public library services when they used to meet those needs through video rentals, bookstores, home Internet, etc."*

When asked how the current economic recession has changed their career plans, two out of five (40%) said their plans had not changed. One in four (25%) said they would retire later than planned; 39% claimed they would stay in their current library job as a result of the recession. Responses to these job-related questions indicate that although libraries were seeing changes, a large percentage of respondents were unaffected and had not changed their career plans.

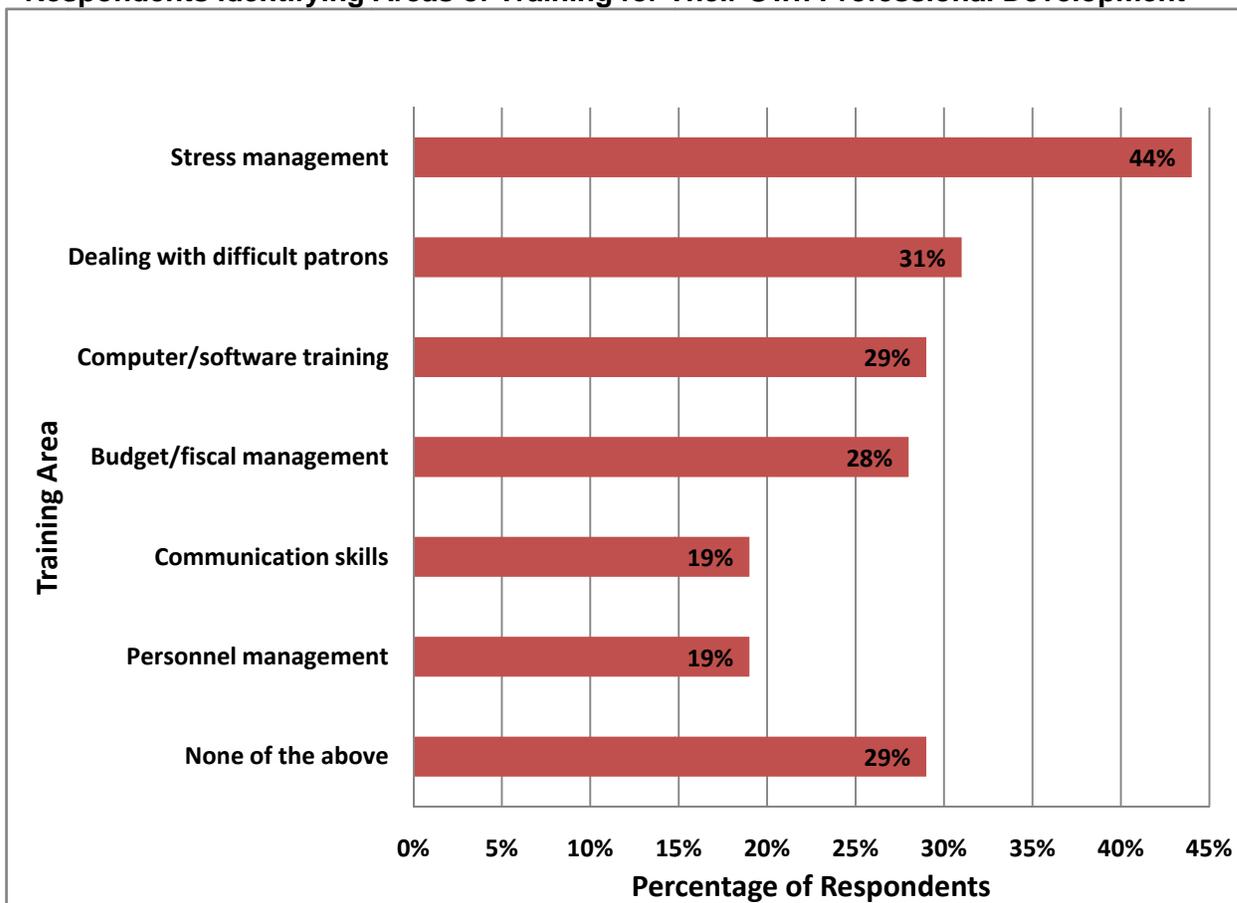
*"As a solo librarian in a small library, I have lost my total budget and now must rely on donations and free books for acquisitions. Additionally the part-time assistant position has been cut so I must pick-up those job tasks as well as other tasks created by lost positions in other parts of the organization."*



### Additional Training

The final set of questions asked respondents whether they felt the need for additional professional training. When asked if they could use training for their own professional development, 44 percent identified stress management as an area in which they could use assistance, 31 percent said dealing with difficult patrons, and 29 percent chose computer skills/software training (see Chart 4).

**Chart 4**  
**Respondents Identifying Areas of Training for Their Own Professional Development**

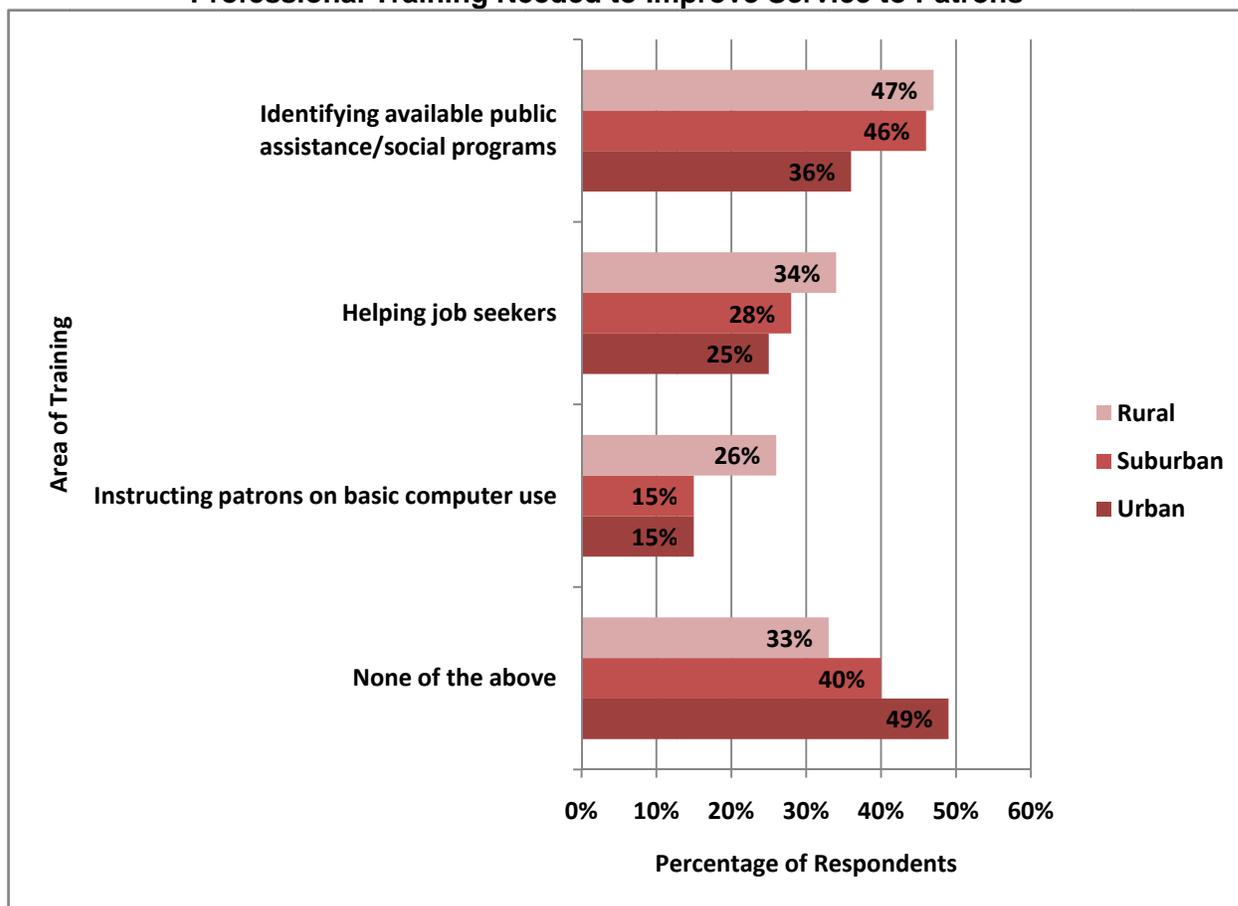


Note: Chart details responses to the question, "As a result of the current economic downturn, do you feel a need for additional training in any of the following areas for your own professional development?"

Finally, respondents were asked whether they would benefit from additional professional training in order to better serve patrons. Nearly half (46%) said they could use training on identifying available assistance/social programs for patrons. Thirty percent said they would benefit from training on how to help job seekers, and 18 percent selected training on how to instruct patrons on basic computer use. Almost another half (44%) chose "none of the above." Those working in rural libraries were more likely than their counterparts in urban or suburban libraries to say they would benefit from additional professional training (see Chart 5).



**Chart 5**  
**Professional Training Needed to Improve Service to Patrons**



Note: Chart details responses to the question, "To better serve patrons, do you feel a need for additional professional training in any of the following areas," arranged by the community type respondents selected.

### Conclusion

Media stories about the economic recession's impact on library use and services are largely focused on public libraries. While this 60-Second Survey is not a comprehensive look at how the recession is challenging libraries, it does provide a snapshot of the changes employees at all types of libraries have witnessed with their patrons and experienced for themselves. Survey results and the anecdotal evidence provided by respondents in their open-ended comments demonstrate how the economic situation has influenced the way patrons use libraries and in many cases increased the stress of librarians.

### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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# Challenged Materials in Colorado Public Libraries, 2008

ED3/110.10/No. 278

August 31, 2009

Administered by the Library Research Service (LRS), the Public Library Annual Report collects information from Colorado's public libraries. This survey collects a wide range of data, including the number of challenges to library materials, services, and the Internet. In 2008, 19 of the 115 public libraries in Colorado reported at least one challenge.

**What is a challenge?**  
The American Library Association defines a challenge as "an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others."

**Challenges in Colorado**  
More than one out of ten public libraries in Colorado received a challenge in 2008.

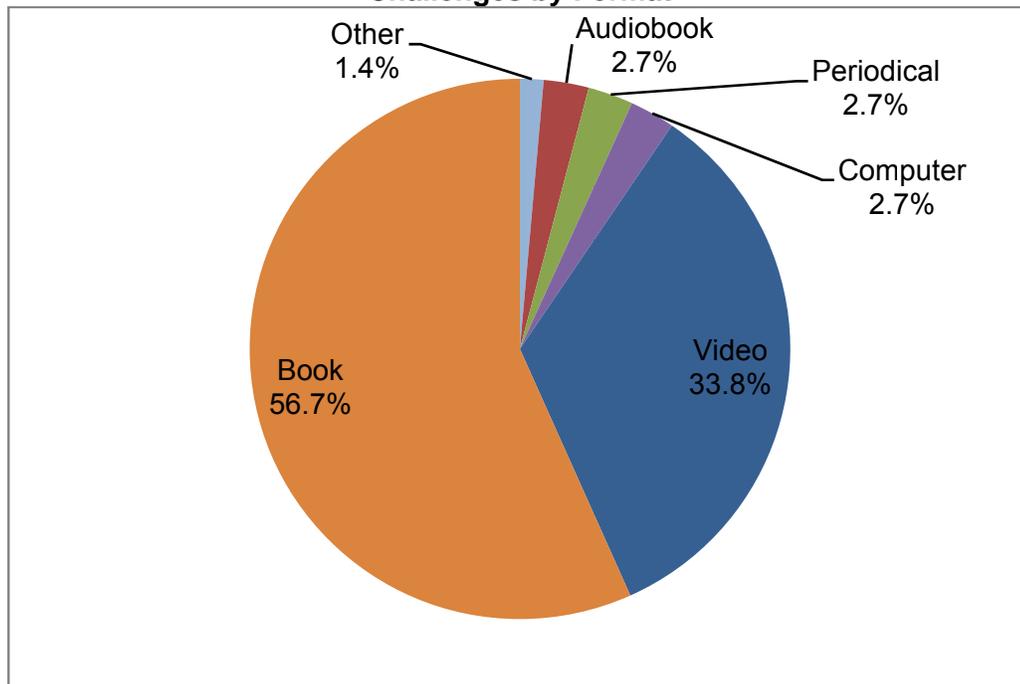
The LRS sends a follow up survey each year to libraries that report challenges on their annual survey. This follow up survey requests more detailed information about the challenges received, including format, title, and the reason for the challenge. In 2008, 17 of the 19 libraries that reported challenges responded to this survey. Among those libraries there were a total of 74

challenges received.

## Formats Challenged

Similar to previous years, most challenges were for books (56.7%). About one in three challenges (33.8%) were for a video. The remaining challenges were for audiobooks, periodicals, the Internet, and other materials or services (see Chart 1).

**Chart 1**  
**Colorado Public Libraries, 2008**  
**Challenges by Format**



Three items received multiple challenges, all of which were children’s books. These books were “Little Monkey’s Peeing Circus” by Tjibbe Veldkamp (five challenges), “Uncle Bobby’s Wedding” by Sarah Brannen (four challenges), and “Mommy Laid an Egg: Or, Where Do Babies Come From?” by Babette Cole (two challenges).

**Most Frequently Challenged Books**

Of the top ten most frequently challenged books of 2008 reported by the American Library Association (ALA), only one title was challenged in Colorado: “Uncle Bobby’s Wedding” by Sarah Brannen. View the full list published by ALA here: <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/21stcenturychallenged/2008/index.cfm>.

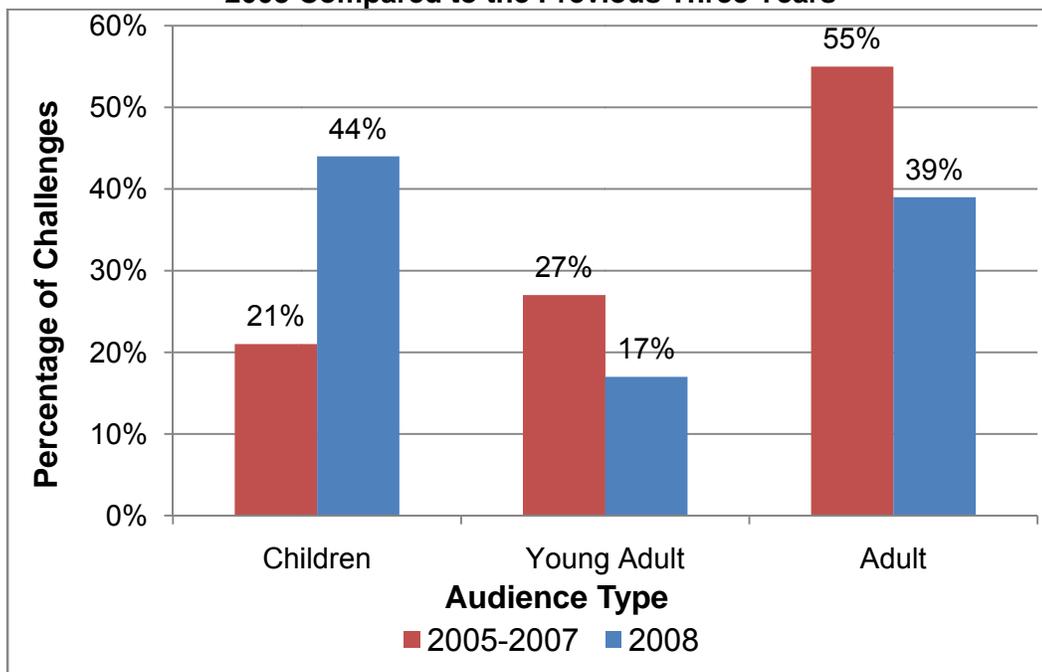
**Audience**

In previous years, adult materials were challenged more frequently than young adult or children’s materials. However, in 2008 children’s materials received more challenges (44%) than the other age group’s materials (see Chart 2). Adult materials made up more than a third (39%) of the challenges and 17 percent were challenges to young adult materials. In comparison with data from the previous three years, challenges based on audience changed substantially for each age group in 2008.

**Fewer Changes in 2008**

In 2008, 88 percent of challenges resulted in no change, the highest percentage since the Library Research Service began conducting the follow up survey.

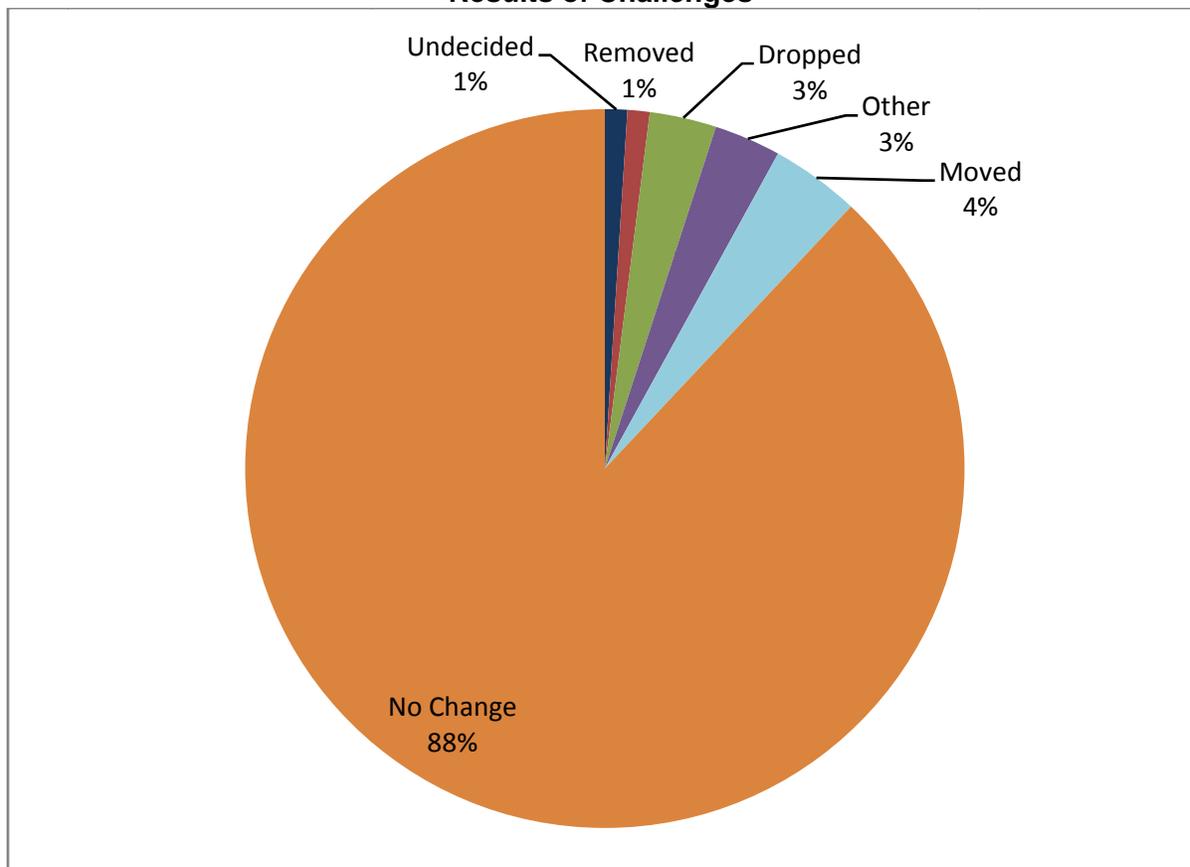
**Chart 2**  
**Colorado Public Libraries, 2008**  
**Challenges by Audience**  
**2008 Compared to the Previous Three Years**



### Actions Taken

Respondents were also asked what action was taken as a result of the challenge. In 2008 the majority of challenges (88%) resulted in no change. Four percent of the challenges resulted in moving the item, three percent had some other action taken, three percent were dropped by the challenger, one item (1%) was removed, and one challenge (1%) has not yet been resolved (see Chart 3).

**Chart 3**  
**Colorado Public Libraries, 2008**  
**Results of Challenges**



### Reasons for Challenges

LRS's follow up survey also asked why the material was challenged. Respondents were able to designate multiple reasons. The two most frequently cited reasons were sexually explicit or unsuited to age group (see Table 1). These two reasons have been the most frequently cited reasons reported each year the follow up survey has been conducted.



### New Issue in 2008

A unique type of challenge was reported on the follow up survey in 2008. One of Colorado's public libraries received 35 challenges regarding adult content websites. However, these challenges were different from those already discussed, as they were a request to *gain access* to websites already blocked by the library's Internet filtering system. These challenges really represent a challenge to the library's Internet policy, rather than a challenge to the library's materials. For this reason, these challenges have been extracted from the data presented in this Fast Facts. This is the first year a challenge of this sort has been reported on the LRS follow up survey, but if libraries continue to implement Internet filters, this may be a future issue to discuss regarding challenges.

Reason for Challenge	Frequency of Reason	Percent of Items
Sexually explicit	27	36.5%
Unsuited to age group	26	35.1%
Offensive language	15	20.3%
Nudity	14	18.9%
Violence	14	18.9%
Homosexuality	8	10.8%
Insensitivity	5	6.7%
Other	5	6.7%
Religious viewpoint	5	6.7%
Anti-family	4	5.4%
Sex education	4	5.4%
Racism	3	4.0%
Anti-ethnic	2	2.7%
Drugs	2	2.7%
Sexism	2	2.7%
Suicide	2	2.7%
Abortion	1	1.3%
Occult/Satanism	1	1.3%
Political viewpoint	1	1.3%

#### For More Information on Challenges and Intellectual Freedom

- Visit the Colorado Association of Libraries Intellectual Freedom Committee website: <http://cal-webs.org/committees6.html>
- Visit the American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) website: <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm>
- Visit the American Library Association OIF "Banned and Challenged Books" page: <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/index.cfm>

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# “ASK” – A National Campaign for Reference?

ED3/110.10/No. 279

September 23, 2009

In a world where unreliable authorship and reviewed scholarship are in a mixed bag just a Google search away, what role should the library community play in providing information acquisition and discernment?

Inspired by a discussion from the Dig\_Ref listserv, LRS conducted a 60-Second Survey in late 2008 and asked if librarian-assisted reference services should be promoted. If so, should a library organization promote reference, perhaps with an “ASK” campaign (similar to ALA’s “READ” campaign)? The survey also included questions to measure opinion on the significance of reference and virtual reference. Almost 1,500 library employees responded and over 560 of them shared their views and ideas with comments.

### What is an LRS 60-Second Survey?

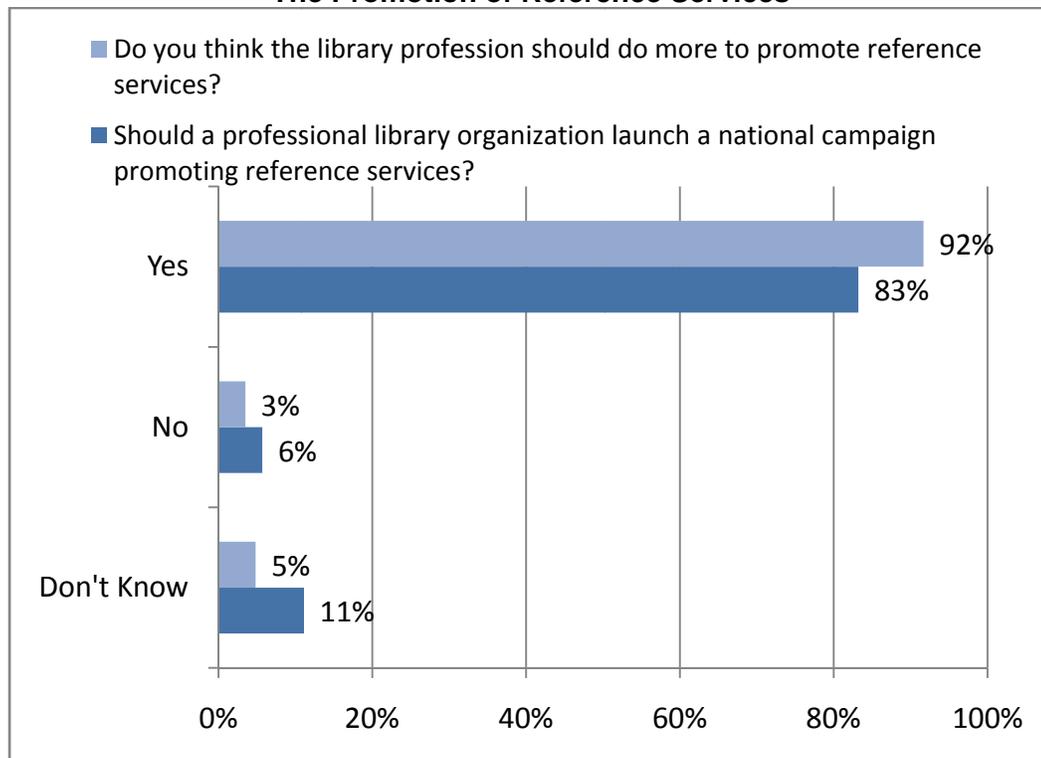
In the style of an online readers' poll, the 60-Second Survey format is short and to the point. By definition, the survey can be answered in a minute or less. Narrow by intent, 60-Second Surveys capture the perceptions and knowledge of respondents on a single timely topic. The online surveys are distributed electronically via email, listservs, blogs, etc. Results are reported briefly on the LRS blog and in more detail in Fast Facts.

The survey also included questions to measure opinion on the significance of reference and virtual reference. Almost 1,500 library employees responded and over 560 of them shared their views and ideas with comments.

### Promoting Reference

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (92%) that the library profession should do more to promote reference services (see Chart 1). A handful of respondents (3%) said that reference services should not be promoted at all. The remaining 5 percent responded that they are not sure whether reference services should be promoted.

**Chart 1:  
The Promotion of Reference Services**



The idea of a professional organization launching a national campaign to promote reference garnered slightly less but still substantial support, with over eight out of ten (83%) respondents in favor (see Chart 1) of such an effort. Just over twenty (6%) said that a professional organization should not launch a reference campaign and the remainder (11%) said they “don’t know.”

Public library employees were most likely to be in favor of the idea of a professional organization starting a reference campaign, with 87 percent indicating support. Respondents from academic libraries were somewhat less likely to favor a campaign, with 78 percent in support.

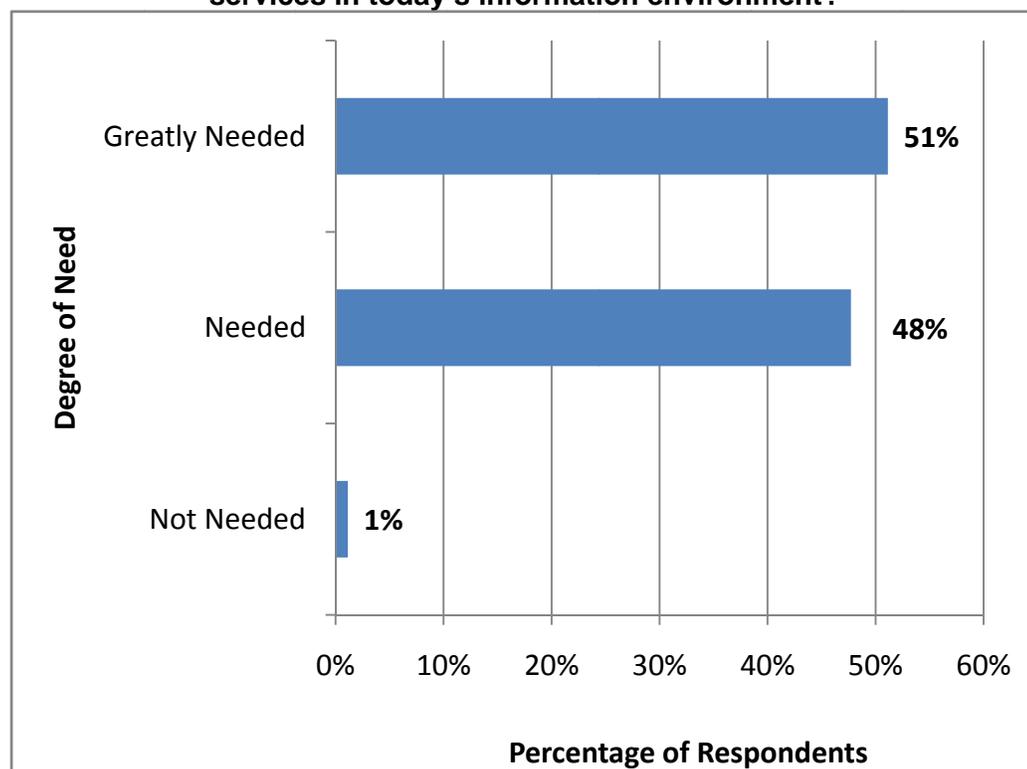
Many comments substantiated the respondents’ support of a national campaign for reference. The small percentage of dissenting respondents opined that librarians are busy enough with in-person, phone, chat, and email reference; there is no need to promote their services. Others lamented that reference desks are too often staffed by under-trained employees, which they consider a predicament that puts limitations on a service they decree as critical.

“This is a vital effort. Re-branding reference librarians as “super searchers” ought to be job #1 for the profession.”

### Reference as a Critical Service

As one would anticipate, the survey results show the value placed in reference services with 1,473 (99%) of the 1,494 respondents viewing librarian-assisted searching as a necessity. Over half of those respondents (51%) say that assisted searches are *greatly* needed (see Chart 2). Only seventeen respondents claimed that librarian-assisted reference services are not needed (1%).

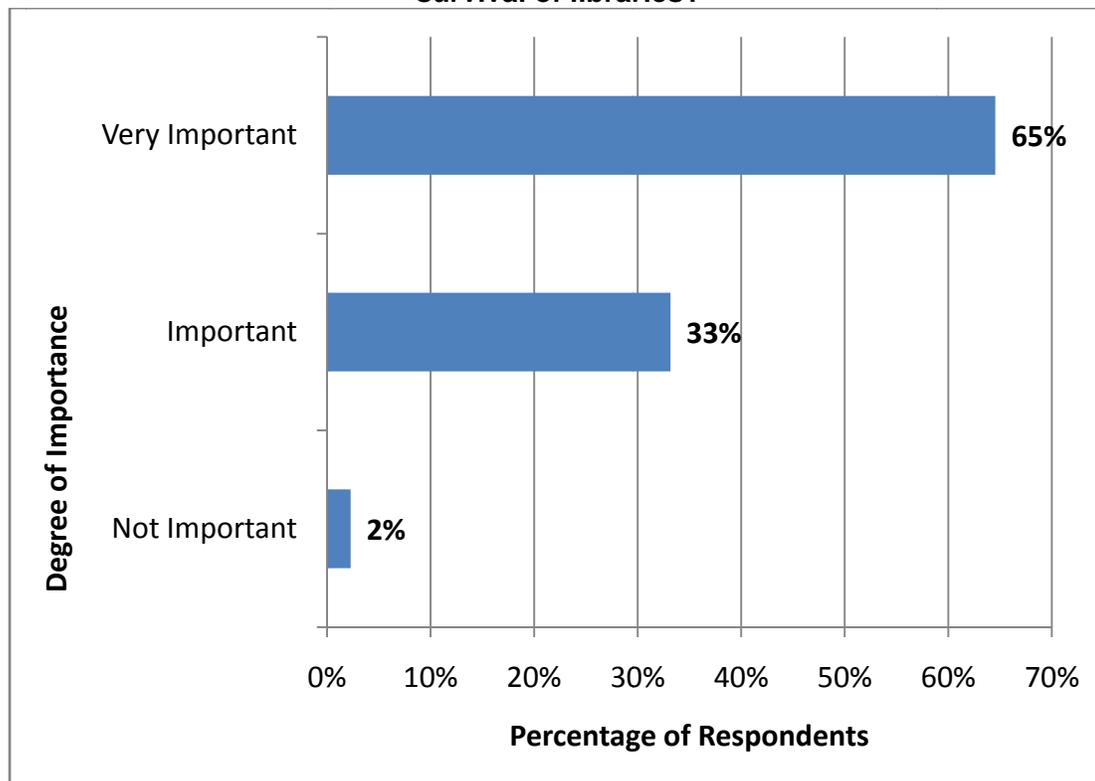
**Chart 2:**  
**How great is the need for librarian-assisted search services in today’s information environment?**



Librarians concur that reference services are needed, but are they considered critical to the survival of libraries? Just under two-thirds (65%) of the respondents agree that reference services are *very important* to the survival of libraries and one-third (33%) feel they are *important* (see Chart 3). Only 2 percent of respondents claimed that reference services are not important to the survival of libraries.

"I believe that there are three key points to library survivorship: youth services to establish behaviors; reading celebration; and reference services. Each is a leg of the stool supporting healthy libraries."

**Chart 3:**  
**How critical are reference services to the survival of libraries?**



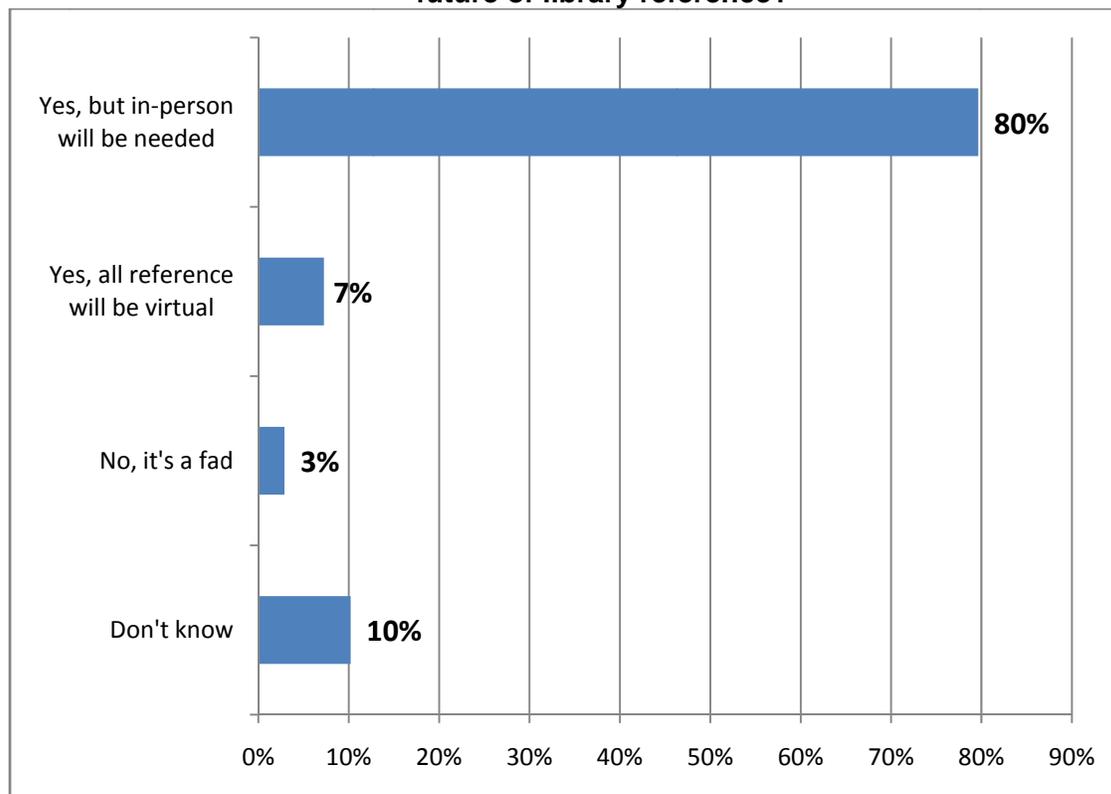
### Virtual Reference

Respondents believe that virtual reference will be an integral complement to in-person interviews in the future of librarian-assisted searching (see Chart 4). Eight out of ten (80%) respondents agree that virtual reference will be an important tool going forward, but it will never replace in-person reference interviews. Less than one in ten (7%) responded that all reference would soon be done in a virtual environment, and fewer than half that many (3%) think virtual reference is a fad.

"It is the in-person service that provides the opportunity for the most efficient, meaningful, and thorough support and instruction . . . while at the same time defining the dynamic and rich social-educational community that is the library. Virtual reference is a distant second to the real thing!"



**Chart 4:**  
**Do you think virtual reference services are the future of library reference?**



Many comments left by respondents regard virtual reference as an essential service provided by libraries. Other comments suggest that existing virtual reference tools are clunky and do not provide proper patron feedback in the timely manner necessary to complete successful reference transactions. Some comments indicated a hopeful attitude that technology will advance and bring about better tools in the future.

“Sometimes I wish librarians would stop trying to out google Google. Let it go! Focus on how we can teach people to search smarter.”

### Surprising Results?

The idea that librarians consider reference to be a valuable service comes as no surprise. The real story lies in the fact that a strong majority of librarians would like to see a professional library organization launch a campaign to promote reference services, which they view as a critical function of libraries. The overwhelming response shows that librarians are interested in sharing their thoughts on how libraries might advance the public's awareness and utilization of librarian-assisted information acquisition.

“We need to meet our users where they are, not where we wish they were. Many people never set foot into a library anymore, but they could use our assistance in sorting through all of the garbage that is floating around on the Internet to locate the reliable, authoritative information. Without marketing our services, without making the public aware of what we have to offer them, how can they know just how much we can help them?”

#### ABOUT THIS ISSUE

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Fast Facts – Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service  
 Colorado State Library • Colorado Department of Education

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# Web 2.0 and Colorado's Public Libraries

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Like most sectors, public libraries are being dramatically affected by a world of rapidly changing technology. Savvy consumers are beginning to expect the organizations that they interact with to have increasingly sophisticated web presences. In order to compete for their patrons' attention, and better serve their communities, some public libraries are beginning to enter into the realm of "Web 2.0," reaching out to users in new ways.



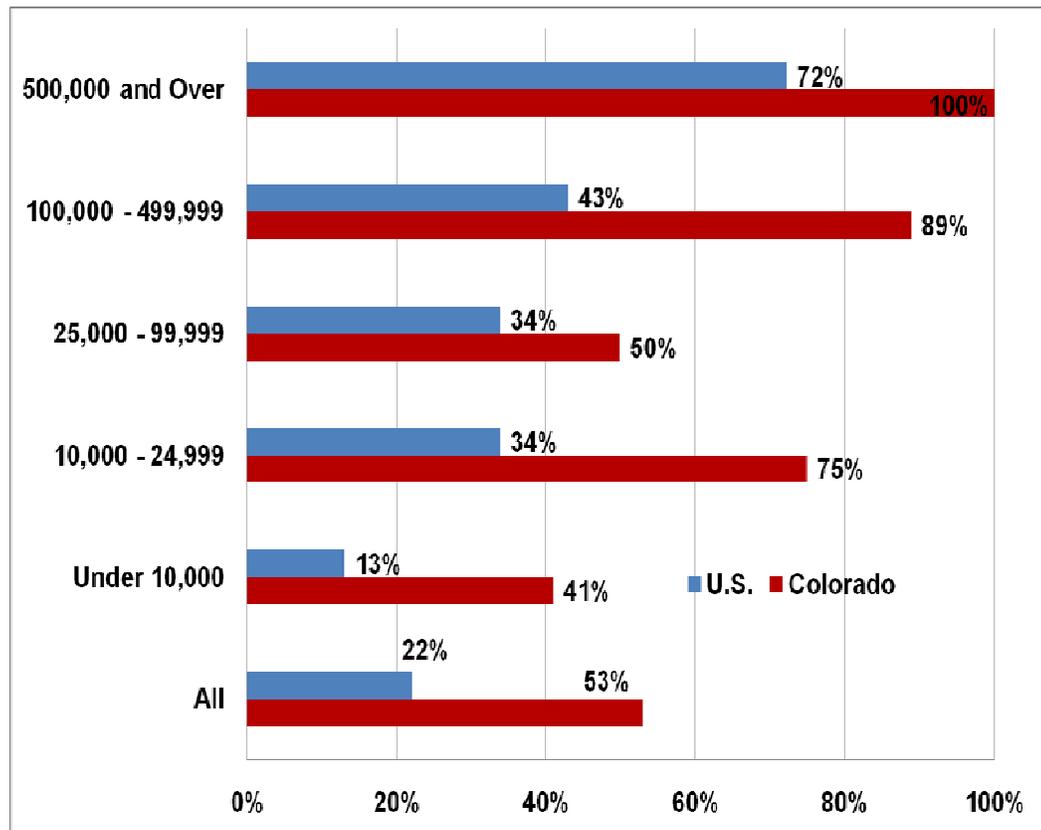
The Library Research Service (LRS) recently concluded a study, *U.S. Public Libraries and the Use of Web Technologies*,<sup>1</sup> which sought to determine the extent to which public libraries across the nation are adopting specific web technologies ranging from the most basic – having a web presence – to more recent technological developments such as having a presence on various social networking sites. In the spring of 2008, LRS staff members scoured the web sites of nearly 600 public libraries in the United States, looking for the existence of these technologies. The study included all public libraries in Colorado, giving us the opportunity to see where Colorado's libraries stand relative to their counterparts nationwide in terms of web technology implementation.

## Virtual Reference

There were a few areas where Colorado's public libraries far outpaced their peers in the rest of the country. Most notably, Colorado's public libraries were well over twice as likely to provide a chat reference service than the public libraries in United States as a whole (see Chart 1). More than half (53%) of the state's public libraries offer such a service, compared with just over one in five (22%) nationwide. This difference existed for libraries of all sizes. For instance, all public libraries serving at least 500,000 people in Colorado provided chat reference, compared with 72 percent nationwide, and the rate of chat reference availability for libraries serving between 100,000 and 499,999 patrons was more than twice as high in Colorado than in the nation generally (89% versus 43%). The contrast between libraries in Colorado and those elsewhere is even greater when comparing smaller libraries. Colorado public libraries serving fewer than 10,000 people are over three times more likely to offer chat reference to their patrons than similar sized libraries throughout the United States (41% versus 13%).

<sup>1</sup> Lietzau, Z. (2009) *U.S. Public Libraries and the Use of Web Technologies* (Closer Look Report). Denver, CO: Colorado State Library, Library Research Service.



**Chart 1: U.S. Public Libraries with Chat Reference Services, Colorado and United States**


This high rate of public libraries providing chat reference in Colorado can be attributed mainly, if not wholly, to the presence of AskColorado, the state's collaborative virtual reference services. In 2008, while some of the state's public libraries use AskColorado in addition to another virtual reference service, only two Colorado public libraries were identified that provided chat reference but did not use AskColorado.

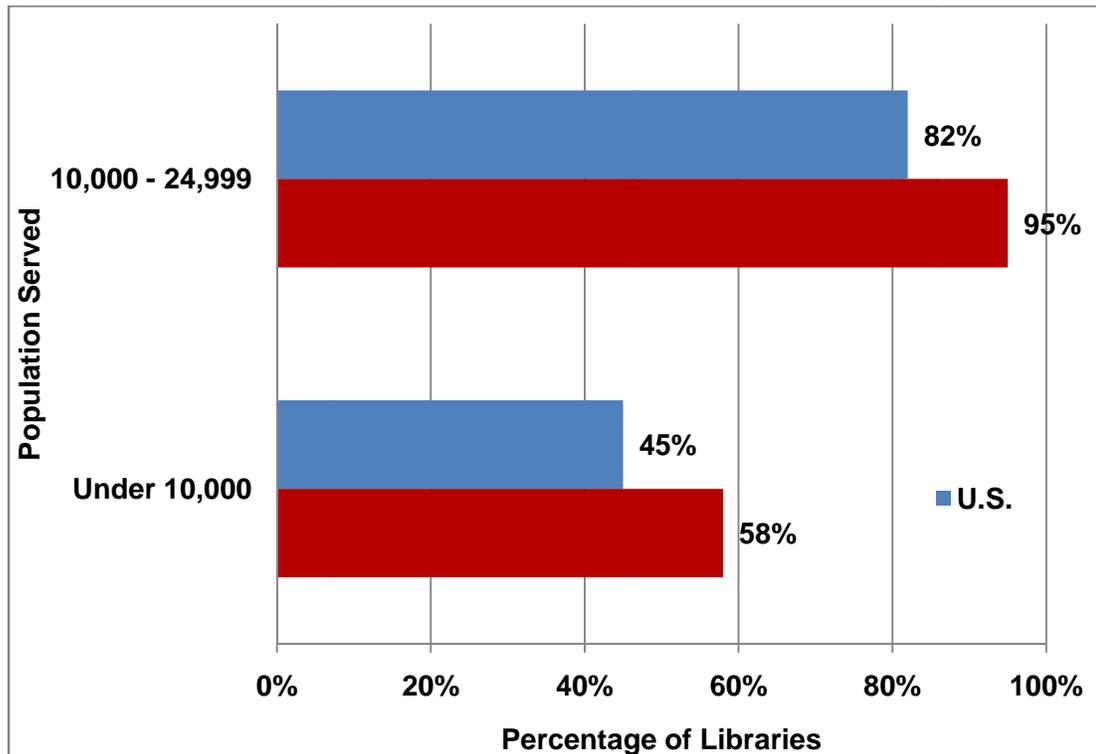
According to AskColorado coordinator Kris Johnson, "Early on, libraries in Colorado realized offering a 24/7 chat reference service would benefit their patrons, but that they couldn't offer the service alone. So, in 2003 Colorado libraries formed the AskColorado virtual reference cooperative. Member libraries contribute financially to the service, and about half of those libraries staff the service. Libraries in the state have embraced this model."

### Online Catalogs

The other area where Colorado's public libraries significantly outperformed their counterparts nationwide was in the likelihood of its libraries to provide online access to their catalogs. An estimated 62 percent of public libraries in the United States allowed online catalog access; that number jumped to 73 percent for Colorado's libraries. Again, Colorado outpaced the nation primarily among the smallest libraries (see Chart 2). Nearly all (95%) of Colorado's libraries serving 10,000-24,999 people provided such access, compared with just over four out of five (82%) nationwide. Among libraries serving fewer than 10,000, 58 percent in Colorado provided online account access compared with 45 percent nationwide.



**Chart 2: Percentage of Public Libraries that Provide Online Access to their Catalogs, Colorado and United States**



Like the differences in chat reference, much of the success Colorado's public libraries achieve in terms of offering online catalog access can be attributed to the existence of a statewide service. In this case, the Plinkit project, which assists libraries by providing a no-cost solution to developing an online web presence, is crucial. According to Christine Kreger, Plinkit project coordinator for Colorado, "Libraries today are all about building community and being accessible to their patrons. Plinkit, a website creation and hosting service provided by the Colorado State Library, offers small, rural libraries across Colorado the opportunity to put their library online and to allow their users to connect to the library's catalog, information and services 24/7."

#### **Plinkit Helps Libraries Adopt Web2.0 Technologies**

"Plinkit has significantly improved our library service to patrons in Teller County. Because of Plinkit we have been able to create a great looking, professional website for our two libraries. We list our events, computer classes and story times on our Plinkit calendar. We have customized our Plinkit homepage to include library news, links to our catalog, links to our proprietary databases, an online Interlibrary Loan form, links to state and local services, a link to Ask Colorado, and much more."

-Plinkit User

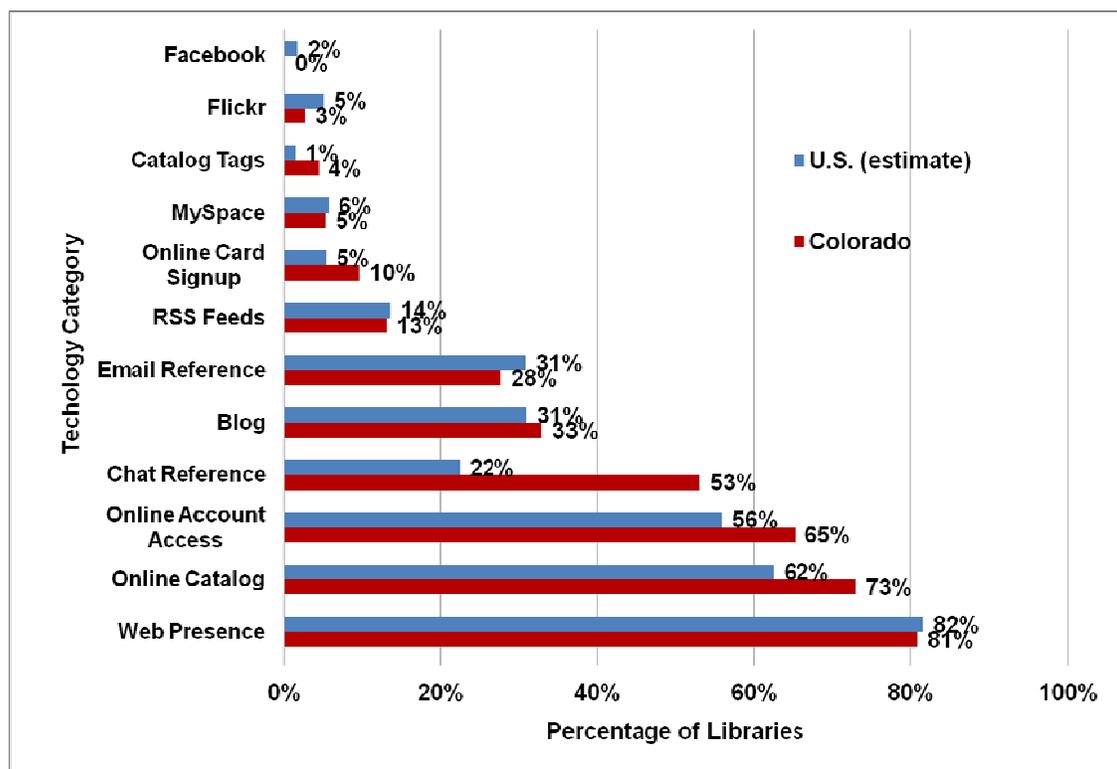
#### **Other Web 2.0 Technologies**

For most other technologies included in the study, results for Colorado's public libraries mirrored the nation-wide sample (see Chart 3). Though most libraries in Colorado had a web presence (81%), like their peers across the country, public libraries in Colorado were not likely to have ventured very deeply into Web 2.0 technologies at the time of the study. About a third of the public libraries in Colorado were communicating with their patrons via a blog or blogs, and roughly the same percentage explicitly allowed their patrons to send in



reference questions via email. Presence in social networking spaces was nearly non-existent for Colorado's public libraries, and though libraries in Colorado were slightly more likely to allow for tagging of catalog items than the rest of the nation as a whole, only four percent allowed this option.

**Chart 3: Percentage of Libraries with Various Web 2.0 Technologies, Colorado and U.S.**



Note: about 60% of public libraries in the United States, and a similar percentage in Colorado, serve fewer than 10,000 people. This high proportion of small libraries, which are less likely to have adopted web technologies, may cause the percentages in this chart to be lower than one might assume.

The fast-evolving nature of the web makes it difficult to determine which technologies are worth the investment of resources, and which are flashes in the pan. Public libraries in Colorado, like their counterparts throughout the United States, are still feeling their way through the wilds of Web 2.0. One thing, however, is evident. When a path has been chosen, collaboration can be key in making progress. In this venue – with AskColorado and Plinkit as examples – Colorado's public libraries are trailblazers.

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# State's Collaborative Climate Fosters Interlibrary Loan in Colorado

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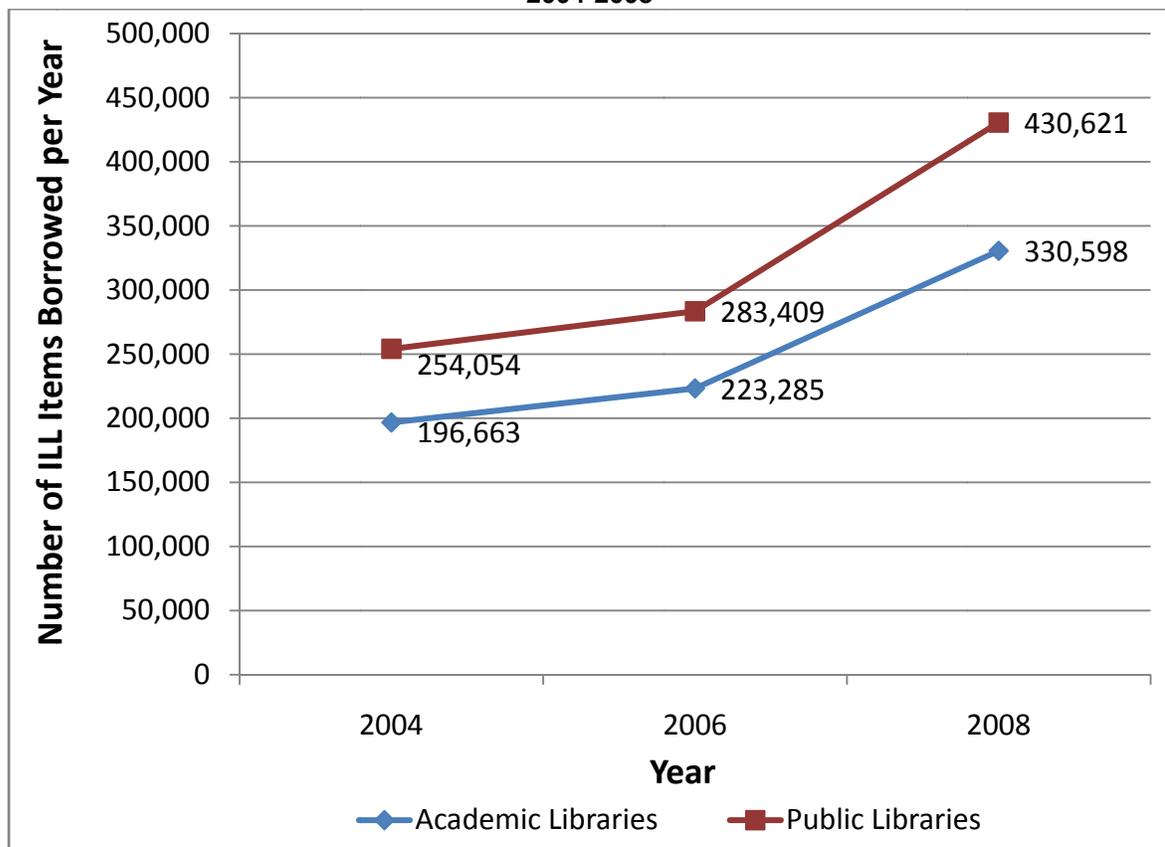
Interlibrary loan (ILL) is a popular research support service in Colorado libraries. ILL borrowing has increased substantially among public and academic libraries in the state since 2004. Although the increase has been steady for these libraries, items borrowed via ILL still make up a fairly small percentage of circulation overall.

## Academic and Public Libraries

ILL traffic has increased considerably among Colorado's academic libraries between 2004 and 2008. During that time, the number of items borrowed via ILL has increased 68 percent (see Chart 1). Like academic libraries, the number of items borrowed via ILL has increased significantly in the state's public libraries - 69 percent between 2004 and 2008.

**Interlibrary Loan Code**  
According to the American Library Association's Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States, "interlibrary loan is based on a tradition of sharing resources between various types and sizes of libraries and rests on the belief that no library, no matter how large or well supported, is self-sufficient in today's world."

**Chart 1**  
**ILL Items Borrowed Per Year in Colorado's Academic and Public Libraries 2004-2008**



## How does ILL affect circulation overall?

Clearly, borrowing through ILL among both library types is increasing, but is that increase impacting circulation? For public libraries, items borrowed through ILL make up a relatively small percentage of total circulation - just under 1 percent (see Table 1). In academic libraries the percentage is higher, increasing from 5.5 percent in 2004 to almost 11 percent in 2008.

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Circulation Borrowed through ILL in Colorado's Libraries**

	2004	2006	2008
<b>Academic Libraries</b>	5.5%	6.4%	10.8%
<b>Public Libraries</b>	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%

Circulation is changing differently among the two library types as well. In public libraries circulation has increased 24 percent, while in academic libraries it has *decreased* 14 percent. Although borrowed ILL items constitute a higher percentage of circulation in academic libraries, this is due, in part, to the fact that circulation overall has declined over the past five years. The increased use of ILL combined with the decrease in circulation in academic libraries could also represent a difference in how public library patrons and academic library patrons use their libraries.



Though ILL borrowing is a relatively small percentage of circulation, ILL is still an important service providing patrons with otherwise unavailable resources. Prospector, the unified catalog of 25 academic and public libraries in Colorado and Wyoming, is one way Coloradan's are receiving these resources. Rose Nelson, Systems Librarian for the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, said 65 percent of Prospector libraries' holdings are unique items. By collaborating with other libraries through programs like Prospector, Colorado's library

patrons have access to those unique, otherwise unavailable, items.

### School Libraries

In addition to public and academic libraries, borrowed items increased, though not as dramatically, among a school library cohort of about 320 libraries. This cohort of 320 libraries are libraries that consistently submitted the Colorado School Library Survey in 2004, 2006, and 2008. Items borrowed per week through ILL increased 11 percent for these school libraries between 2004 and 2008. All of Colorado's school libraries are not discussed here because not all school libraries participate in the annual survey.



### Collaborative Programs Contribute to Success in Colorado

Increasingly, patrons of Colorado's academic and public libraries are borrowing items through ILL. Colorado libraries have multiple factors that are undoubtedly contributing to this increase:

- **SWIFT** - the free ILL system for academic, public, school, and special libraries in Colorado, operated by the Network and Resource Sharing unit of the Colorado State Library with over 400 participating libraries
- **Prospector** – the unified catalog of 25 public and academic libraries in Colorado and Wyoming, operated by the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries
- **Colorado Statewide Courier** – the delivery system between Colorado's libraries, operated by the Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC)

The unique combination of these services creates a climate that greatly supports ILL use in Colorado. Although generally a small percentage of circulation, ILL service is an important service that enables libraries to meet their patrons' unique information needs.

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# Use of Statewide Databases Skyrockets in 2009: Library Patrons Benefit from Additional Databases & Training

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Use of electronic databases in Colorado libraries increased significantly during the last fiscal year, according to new data from the Acquisition of Information Resources Statewide (AIRS) Committee. Thanks to a significant investment in training for librarians and additions to the statewide database package, database use more than doubled between Fiscal Year 2007-08 (FY08) and Fiscal Year 2008-09 (FY09).

For each fiscal year, the AIRS Committee—a group of representatives from the Colorado State Library, the Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC), the Bibliographic Center for Research (BCR), Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, and individuals from public, academic, school, and special libraries—negotiates the database package from EBSCO and OCLC at a special statewide rate. The package includes databases covering general, business, and K-12 information (see sidebar).

During FY08, 695 libraries subscribed to the AIRS database package, compared to 715 in FY09. In spite of only a modest increase (3%) in the number of participating libraries and *comparing only the databases common to both years*, the number of sessions increased by 56 percent for all libraries from FY08 to FY09. For some types of libraries the increase was even greater, with special (120%) and public (113%) libraries showing the largest growth (see Table 1).

## Databases in the AIRS Package Fiscal Year 2008

- Academic Search Premier
- Agricola
- Biomedical Reference Collection: Basic Edition
- Business Source Premier
- Corporate ResourceNet
- EBSCO Animals
- ERIC
- Fuente Academica
- Health Source: Consumer Edition
- Image Collection
- MAS Ultra – School Edition
- MedicLatina
- MiddleSearch Plus
- Newspaper Source
- Nursing and Allied Health Collection: Basic Edition
- Primary Search
- Professional Development Collection
- Regional Business News
- TopicSearch
- WorldCat

## Training Pays Off

These increases can be attributed largely to the training sessions, which were comprehensive and used different approaches for different types of libraries, according to Lisa Priebe, Assistant Director at CLiC, which helped coordinate trainings throughout the state. “Without a trained staff, you can’t train your patrons,” Priebe said.

**Table 1**  
**AIRS Database Package Use, 2008 and 2009**  
**Comparing Databases Common to Both FY08 & FY09**

Library Type	Number of Sessions		
	Fiscal Year 2008	Fiscal Year 2009	Percent Increase
Academic	1,605,104	2,177,666	36%
Community College	223,621	444,470	99%
K-12	1,135,949	1,832,052	61%
Public	249,178	531,541	113%
Special	25,516	56,091	120%
<b>ALL LIBRARIES</b>	<b>3,239,368</b>	<b>5,041,820</b>	<b>56%</b>

Note: A session is defined as a login by the user to one or more databases from a vendor to find information on one or more topics.



During FY09, the AIRS committee focused on training librarians, in-person and online, on how to use databases in the package. Representatives from EBSCO and CLiC conducted 25 webinars and 37 live training sessions for librarians throughout the state. In addition, BCR taught three classes on OCLC FirstSearch and EBSCO conducted four “Train the Trainer” sessions, which gave attendees the skills to teach their coworkers and patrons about package databases. Between September 2008 and May 2009, 938 Colorado librarians (excluding those who viewed archived webinars) received database training. “The investment in training for library staff throughout Colorado’s libraries had a planned effect. Becoming more informed about the databases meant that staff members promoted them directly to their communities in various settings, both within the library as well as through outreach efforts,” said Jim Duncan, Director of Networking and Resource Sharing.

### More Databases, More Use

Investing in training is only half the story. As the database package grew, so did the number of sessions in all types of libraries.

A 2007 survey of library staff identified the topics most frequently requested by patrons, educators, and students. Nine databases related to these popular topics were added for FY09. When the use of these databases is included in the comparison to FY08, the increases in use are even more dramatic. Statewide, the use of AIRS databases increased by 139 percent from FY08 to FY09. Public libraries saw the largest increases with the number of database sessions increasing by more than 800 percent in FY09. Use in special, community college, and K-12 libraries increased significantly as well—more than doubling in a year (see Table 2).

Once again the increased usage was no accident, but instead the result of AIRS Committee initiatives. “The addition of educational and research content, geared to kids for study and homework, addressed the findings of an earlier needs assessment in which libraries reported and stressed their desire to deliver quality K-12 content,” explained Duncan, adding “The demand was already there and primed to consume all of that database content.”

### Databases Added to the AIRS Package Fiscal Year 2009

- Auto Repair Center
- Consumer Health Complete
- History Reference Center
- Literary Reference Center
- MasterFILE Premier
- NovelList
- NovelList K-8
- Points of View Reference Center
- Science Reference Center

Note: the Image Collection database was removed in 2009.

**Table 2**  
**AIRS Database Package Use, 2008 and 2009**  
**Comparing FY08 to FY09, Including Additional Databases in FY09**

Library Type	Number of Sessions		Percent Increase
	Fiscal Year 2008	Fiscal Year 2009	
Academic	1,605,104	2,355,003	47%
Community College	223,621	542,437	143%
K-12	1,135,949	2,436,246	114%
Public	249,178	2,348,402	842%
Special	25,516	68,244	167%
<b>ALL LIBRARIES</b>	<b>3,239,368</b>	<b>7,750,332</b>	<b>139%</b>



### Looking Forward

In 2009-10 (FY10), \$1 million was eliminated by the state from the budget line that had been appropriated in 2008 to subsidize the AIRS database package costs. This resulted in a substantial shortfall in funding and some databases were cut. The AIRS Committee negotiated with EBSCO and OCLC to create an affordable, smaller package, in which the number of EBSCO databases was reduced to the resources most frequently used in all types of libraries. The package now contains 12 databases, and 719 libraries are subscribed as of this writing.

With fewer databases available to patrons, where will patrons turn for information? Some believe the Internet has all the answers—for free. However, as Duncan points out, “Individuals and small businesses that understand and value the role of libraries in providing access to high-quality educational content recognize that libraries offer them a competitive advantage. Unlike so-called ‘free’ Internet resources, these databases are available to library users as an integrated mix, drawing together consultation by professional librarians, training in how to search, customized service, and high-value content.”



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