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Libraries

\$4 to \$1: Public Library Benefits and Budgets—Help Needed

Care about public libraries? Believe that they need better funding? Believe that telling their stories to get that funding requires not only the flesh and blood of a library's success (the ways each patron improves his or her life, the ways the community is enriched by the library) but also the bones (the countable services rendered by the library)?

Interested in a look at how America's public libraries were doing in FY2011 (the most recent year available)—and how things changed from 2009 to 2011?

You can help. Here's the long, long version of the story—and a draft excerpt from the primary planned result of the project.

The Project and the Campaign

IMLS released its public library database for FY2011 in late June. I looked at the database, at what I've done in the past [[Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four \(2012-13\)](#)], based on FY2010 figures; [Graphing Public Library Benefits](#), also based on FY2010 figures; two sets of commentary in *Cites & Insights* [November 2012](#) and [Fall 2012](#); and "The Mythical Average Public Library in *Cites & Insights* [May 2013](#)]" and what seemed most likely to be useful.

I had also, along the way, begun a project just for fun: Collecting the range of mottoes and slogans used by public libraries on their websites. A quarter of the way through scanning public library websites, it was already clear that there were hundreds of mottoes and slogans and that they were interesting, at least to some.

Put it all together and I had a three-book project—one that might only make financial sense with some advance assurance of at least a little revenue. Enter crowdsourcing.

In early July 2013, I started an Indiegogo campaign to assure the completion of this project. Here's what I had to say in a (badly timed!) July 4, 2013 post:

I've just opened an Indiegogo campaign to assure the completion of my (renamed) project on public library benefits and budgets: *\$4 to \$1: Public Library Benefits and Budgets (2013-14)*.

You'll find [the campaign here](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/4-to-1-public-library-benefits-and-budgets/x/3751677/): <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/4-to-1-public-library-benefits-and-budgets/x/3751677/>

My basic goal is \$2,500. At that level, all three books will be completed—and many of them prepurchased as perks.

The three books?

\$4 to \$1: Public Library Benefits and Budgets (2013-14): Libraries by Size

Based on *Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four (2012-13)*, but that title just got too cumbersome when I realized the need to split the project into two books.

As recounted in earlier posts—[specifically this one](#)—this book will have fewer and simpler tables, more graphs and a lot more commentary. Additionally, where the previous book covered a single year, this will compare two years: 2011 and 2009.

I'm guessing the new book will wind up between 150 and 200 pages, maybe a little shorter.

\$4 to \$1: Public Library Benefits and Budgets (2013-14): Libraries by State

While the first chapter of this book will be identical to the book just discussed, the remainder will be state chapters, probably with slightly fewer metrics. I'm aiming for 200 pages or less.

A Library Is...

A book of public library slogans and mottoes gathered from public library websites. I'm just under halfway through doing the scan, with around 800 slogans and mottoes to date. This book may be inspirational. It will never be sold separately—it will only be available as a perk for this or other crowdfunding projects or as a thank-you for larger donations to *Cites & Insights*.

The Indiegogo campaign is a "Fixed Funding" campaign: If people pledge a total of \$2,499 within the 45 days, nobody pays anything and I don't get anything. (In other words, it's like Kickstarter.)

I'm sure I'll be pushing this in various ways at times, but I'll try not to overdo it. No, there's no campaign video at this point: I'm just not tel-egenic.

If the campaign succeeds, all three books will appear. If it doesn't, I'm not sure what will happen.

[My continued thanks to Laura Crossett for suggesting *Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four*; the new title is far more humdrum, but I needed something shorter, and "Buckfour" or \$4, my own internal name, just weren't doing it. That book will remain available.]

Immediately Thereafter...

I publicized the campaign as widely as my social networking would allow without violating what I took to be community standards (e.g., it felt too close to advertising for me to post a PUBLIB announcement). After a day or two, I decided to post to the Facebook ALA-TT group, which is quite large (and not affiliated with the American Library Association). I got some comments—and one interesting question from a government librarian who wondered why this wasn't going through a traditional publisher:

I thought the point of producing a reference work, as I interpret this project to be, is you get a publisher to publish and make money from the sales. I imagine every Public Library system in the nation would want a copy of this report, so sales are almost guaranteed.

Why are you funding this project via IndieGoGo, instead of going the regular publisher route?

Here's my response as of July 8, 2013:

Why IndieGoGo rather than Kickstarter?

Fewer projects, less emphasis on GOTTA HAVE THAT VIDEO PLUG, no approval process: slightly lower fees (4% rather than 5%: not a biggie).

The point of producing a reference work

I must admit that I'd never heard the theory that the point of producing a reference work is "you get a publisher to publish."

I thought the point of producing any work (and I think of \$4 to \$1 as being more advocacy and *current* awareness) was to create something that others would find worthwhile.

But let's get to the broader question: Why not just use a traditional publisher, especially since "I imagine every Public Library system in the nation would want a copy of this report, so sales are almost guaranteed"?

- Speed. Since this is intended to be useful for advocacy and as a reasonably current overview, I looked for timeliness. It will appear the day after I finish editing—I've set mid-October as a deadline for the whole project, but I'd hope to have the first part (Libraries by Size)

out in early September and maybe earlier. Based on past experience, I think it highly unlikely that I'd be able to get this out through a traditional library publisher within six months of completion—actually, I'd be surprised if I even had a contract by mid-September.

- Price. I'd especially like smaller public libraries—which typically don't have their own marketing staffs or statistical experts—use this, and for those libraries, \$45-\$65 is a real barrier. (That seems to be the general range of prices for books from library publishers these days, although some go for a *lot* more.) The IndieGoGo model, if it succeeds, will mean no more than \$9.99 for ebook versions (and maybe less), and a modest price (probably well under \$20) for paperback versions—and even a modest price for ebook versions explicitly permitting multiple access over a campus, library or statewide server. It's not that library publisher prices are too high (given the small market and the costs of professional everything, I don't think they necessarily are), it's that I can do it a lot less expensively.
- Realistic sales projections. There are roughly 9,200 public library systems (including single-branch libraries) in the U.S. Most of them are very small. (How small? For FY2011, 46% served fewer than 6,000 people, 66% served fewer than 14,000, 76% served fewer than 23,000—and 23% served fewer than 2,000.) Most of them won't buy this book; most of them will probably never hear about it. I would be delighted to reach 10% of America's public libraries. I believe all 40-odd library schools should have copies of these books, but my believing that doesn't make it so. To be honest: I don't believe either of the traditional library publishers I normally work with would touch this project—I suspect it wouldn't meet their break-even criteria.

So what's the point?

Going the Indiegogo route may be peculiar, especially since ideally most sales should go to libraries (or Friends groups) rather than individual librarians.

It's an experiment. I think the project's worthwhile—a considerable improvement over a previous version, which sold just enough copies to make a new version intriguing but nowhere near enough to make it worthwhile for a traditional publisher.

The publicity problem

I'm personally disinclined to go into a daily drumbeat of publicity for this project; that may be a fatal error.

I'm confused enough as to PUBLIB guidelines so that I have not posted anything about this (trying to avoid what can be viewed as a commercial plug), although I think others could do so. Maybe. (If/when I do a special C&I issue promoting this, I'll announce that on PUBLIB as usual.)

I'm not regularly part of any Friends list, so haven't really gone there.

I'm not an entrepreneur by nature, which is a problem.

I think this is worthwhile. Only others can decide that for sure.

And, hey, I think *A Library Is...* will be an intriguing and possibly inspirational little collection (not *that* little: I'm just past the halfway point and up to 900 mottoes and slogans, although I may trim that somewhat)—and I currently have no plans to offer that book on its own.

[Take a look](http://igg.me/at/4to1/x/3751677). If you think it's worthwhile, I'd appreciate your help—both in signing up and in publicizing the project. The quick URL to the project is <http://igg.me/at/4to1/x/3751677>

Next...

The campaign did manage to reach one milestone: three digits—passing the \$100 mark. But that's about it, at least as of July 15, 2013, roughly one-third of the way through the campaign. It's sitting at 5.8% of the minimum target.

I'm not a drumbeat person (which may be a fatal flaw): I couldn't see pounding, pounding, pounding out the message. And it's not a sexy project, apparently. But I did add more detail in an FAQ on July 10, 2013—at which point I also promised there wouldn't be any more pushing until at least July 16, 2016. Here's most of the FAQ:

How's it going?

You can check by going to [the campaign itself](#). As of this writing, not so well. That could change, of course.

What happens if it fails?

- The Libraries by Size book will probably happen, maybe, but will also probably be a little more expensive.
- The Libraries by State book, which is of more interest as a look at the diversity of America's libraries than it is as a tool, might not happen at all. If it does, it will be significantly more expensive.
- *A Library Is...* will almost certainly happen. I'd either offer it as a perk for significant contributions to *Cites & Insights*, offer it on its own as an ebook (and maybe a paperback), or both. (Hey, I've gone through some 5,000 libraries, with around 4,200 left to go—all serv-

ing fewer than 10,000 people. It's turning out to be as interesting as I thought.)

What happens if it succeeds?

- That's pretty much spelled out in the various goal levels. Even at the minimal \$2,500, completion of all three books is guaranteed—and quite a few of them would be “presold,” since they're offered as perks for any contribution of \$12 or higher.
- The books would be less expensive than otherwise, maybe even free in some cases.
- I'd be thankful and happy and resolved to do the best possible job.

Does this project replace [Give Us a Dollar and We'll Give You Back Four \(2012-13\)](#)?

No. That book—and the related [Graphing Public Library Benefits](#) and commentary in *Cites & Insights*—offer a more detailed picture of a single year, 2010, but split across several resources.

The new project offers less detail (for libraries by size) but a richer and more integrated view, and looks at both measures for 2011 and changes from 2009 to 2011.

What might happen to *Give Us a Dollar...*: I'm toying with the idea of combining the three resources (essentially cutting-and-pasting between various Word files, with minimal new editing) into a single huge ebook combining tables, graphs and commentary. If I do that, the new item would only be available in two forms: ebook and campus/state-licensed ebook, where I explicitly say the ebook can be loaded onto a server for a campus (including distance students), single-state consortium or state, with no controls on simultaneous usage. I'd take the Lulu ebook version of the current book out of print; the print version and the Amazon/Createspace ebook version would continue to be available. (It's not feasible to offer a print version of the expanded book; it looks to be about 570 pages long, and requires color printing to make sense of many of the graphs. That would mean *production* costs of a print version would be more than \$110 per copy.)

What About [The Big Deal and the Damage Done](#)?

No direct effect, although the (very mild so far) success of that book's “campus license edition” will guide me in future ventures.

I'm 99% certain there is not going to be an unglue.it campaign for this book, for several reasons (including stalled requests, as far as I can tell); I believe the campus license edition fills the need that the unglue.it

campaign might have filled without requiring me to try to come up with yet another high-profile campaign and new perks.

Will there be a next edition of that book including 2012 data?

Probably and probably not. There will probably be *something*—in mid-2014, if all goes well—but it may not be a self-published book. The current book should continue to be valuable.

Hope this helps. If you think it's a worthwhile project, please publicize it, support it or both!

Where Things Stand

That's the situation as of this writing (July 15, 2013). I'm continuing the scan of public libraries for slogans and mottoes—about 3,700 left to go, with just over 1,000 mottoes and slogans collected so far, and I'm really liking what I'm seeing. I'm working on the libraries-by-size book, with draft Chapters 1-3 (introduction, overall numbers, libraries serving fewer than 1,000 patrons) complete. There's a semi-related project (*Mostly Numbers*, an attempt to take some of the fear out of statistics and using Excel for moderately large library datasets such as the IMLS public library and NCES academic library datasets) that's on hold.

The campaign? Not so much.

So a slight update of the FAQ may be in order.

- If you want an ebook copy of *Give Us a Dollar...*, you should order it before August 1, 2013 or plan to buy it from Amazon/CreateSpace. I'm now reasonably certain that I'll create the expanded version; when I do, I'll take the current version off sale. (The expanded version probably *will* be available in both single-copy actual-purchase (you own it; you can sell it, lend it, give it to someone else) and multi-copy server license versions.)
- If you'd like to see this whole project succeed, including the libraries-by-state book (which I believe will be a really interesting set of views of how each state's libraries compare to the nation as a whole), please contribute to the campaign.
- If you want to see *A Library Is...*, either contribute to the campaign or plan to contribute substantially to *C&I*, although that book might yet be available as a separate Lulu ebook and print book.
- Yes, this is the September 2013 *Cites & Insights*—I'm setting that aside for several weeks to leave room for the project (and because the 2013 volume is getting to be awfully long, especially given the apparent level of support).

- And here's the draft version of Chapter 3 to give you an idea of what \$4 to \$1 would be like. Note that it's a rough draft—and that you really should read it in the [single-column online-reading version](#) of *Cites & Insights*, as I've had to reduce graph sizes and lop off columns or reduce typeface size to get tables and figures to fit into the narrower two-column columns.

Libraries Serving Fewer Than 1,000

This category includes 1,052 libraries, some of them very small indeed (33 of them have fewer than 100 potential patrons). Given the small patron counts, expect to see some extreme per capita numbers.

| Benefit Ratio (rounded) | Count | % | Cum% | Rel |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| 20+ | 62 | 5.9% | | 387% |
| 16 to 19 | 28 | 2.7% | 8.6% | 163% |
| 14 to 15 | 18 | 1.7% | 10.3% | 104% |
| 13 | 20 | 1.9% | 12.2% | 211% |
| 12 | 18 | 1.7% | 13.9% | 78% |
| 11 | 28 | 2.7% | 16.5% | 46% |
| 10 | 43 | 4.1% | 20.6% | 58% |
| 9 | 67 | 6.4% | 27.0% | 73% |
| 8 | 85 | 8.1% | 35.1% | 29% |
| 7 | 115 | 10.9% | 46.0% | 18% |
| 6 | 165 | 15.7% | 61.7% | 12% |
| 5 | 163 | 15.5% | 77.2% | -15% |
| 4 | 140 | 13.3% | 90.5% | -29% |
| 3 | 50 | 4.8% | 95.2% | -66% |
| 2 | 40 | 3.8% | 99.0% | -34% |
| 0 to 1 | 10 | 1.0% | 100.0% | -14% |

Table 3.1 Benefit ratios for libraries serving fewer than 1,000 patrons

That begins with benefit ratios, and although the bulk of libraries are in the usual 4 to 7 range, higher benefit ratios appear much more frequently than in most libraries—as the Rel column shows.

Spending Per Capita

| \$/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | BenR |
|--------|-------|---|------|-----|------|
|--------|-------|---|------|-----|------|

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| \$58+ | 290 | 28% | | 66% | 5.3 |
| \$40 to \$57 | 201 | 19% | 47% | 13% | 6.3 |
| \$30 to \$39 | 225 | 21% | 68% | 19% | 6.9 |
| \$20 to \$29 | 164 | 16% | 84% | -24% | 7.3 |
| \$0.12 to \$19 | 172 | 16% | 100% | -42% | 11.0 |

Table 3.2 Spending per capita in 2011

It shouldn't be astonishing that the smallest libraries are disproportionately likely to be well funded: After all, \$58 per capita still means less than \$58,000 total spending.

| Change \$/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | BenR |
|---------------|-------|-----|------|------|------|
| 19%+ | 390 | 37% | | 114% | 6.3 |
| 9% to 18% | 145 | 14% | 51% | -10% | 6.5 |
| 2% to 8% | 122 | 12% | 62% | -36% | 6.4 |
| -4% to 1% | 99 | 9% | 72% | -44% | 6.8 |
| -12% to -5% | 107 | 10% | 82% | -36% | 7.2 |
| < -12% | 189 | 18% | 100% | 10% | 8.0 |

Table 3.3 Changes in spending per capita from 2009 to 2011

The good news here is that more than one-third of these very small libraries saw substantial improvements in spending—and nearly two-thirds saw at least some improvement. Sadly, this group is also slightly overrepresented in the worst loss category.

Circulation Per Capita

| Circ/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|----------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 14+ | 235 | 22% | | 42% | \$71.30 |
| 10 to 13 | 146 | 14% | 36% | -6% | \$51.37 |
| 7 to 9 | 207 | 20% | 56% | 2% | \$39.62 |
| 5 to 6 | 147 | 14% | 70% | -11% | \$34.15 |
| 3 to 4 | 147 | 14% | 84% | -18% | \$30.65 |
| 0 to 2 | 170 | 16% | 100% | -8% | \$20.60 |

Table 3.4 Circulation per capita in 2009, benchmark view

These libraries tend to be well used—and the correlation between spending per capita and circulation per capita is quite clear. It's a strong correlation (0.51).

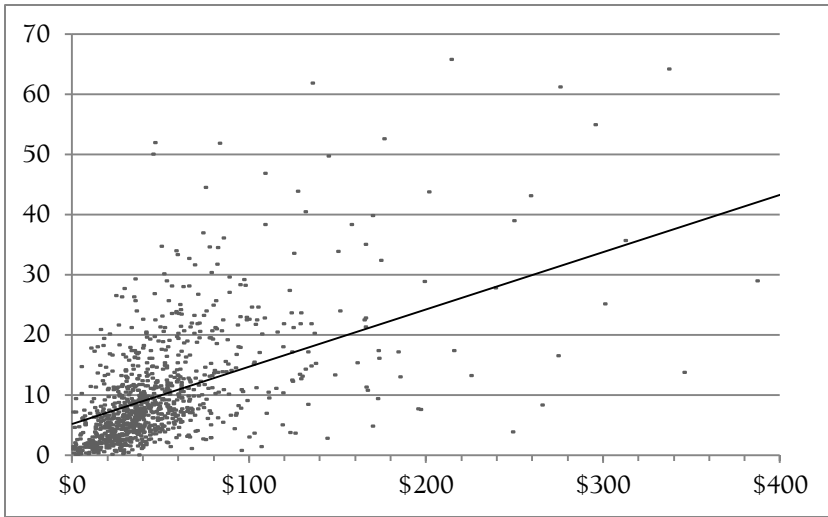


Figure 3.1 Circulation per capita plotted against spending per capita

Figure 3.1 omits 11 libraries in order to make the graph readable: seven libraries spending more than \$400 per capita and four libraries circulating more than 70 items per capita.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | 5.7 | 9.4 | 14.7 | 23.2 | 34.5 |
| \$40-\$57 | 4.1 | 5.8 | 8.5 | 12.3 | 19.0 |
| \$30-\$39 | 3.0 | 5.0 | 7.4 | 9.4 | 13.3 |
| \$20-\$29 | 1.8 | 2.9 | 4.9 | 7.9 | 11.6 |
| \$1-\$19 | 0.7 | 1.5 | 3.1 | 6.2 | 10.1 |
| Overall | 2.1 | 4.4 | 7.7 | 13.1 | 21.9 |

Table 3.5 Circulation per capita in 2011, budget view

Table 3.5 shows a fairly typical pattern. Half of the best-funded libraries circulate more than the top 10% of those spending \$30 to \$39.99 per capita.

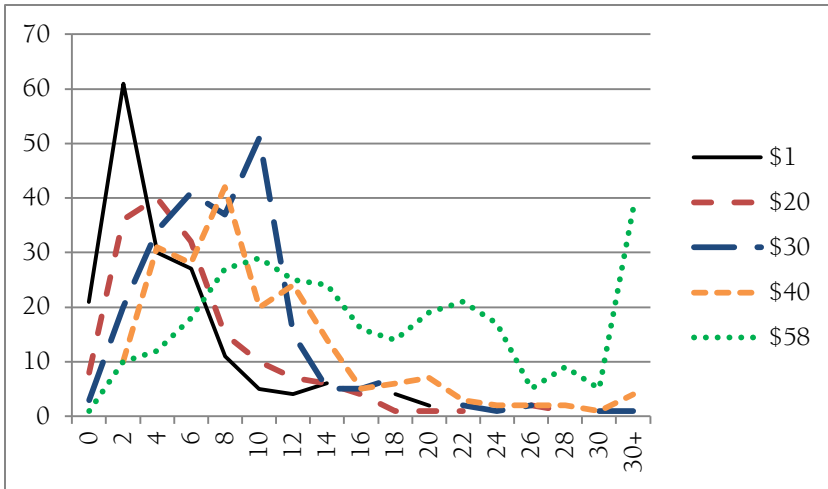


Figure 3.2 Circulation per capita (nearest two) occurrence by spending category

Figure 3.2, which lumps together all cases of more than 30 circulation per capita as “30+,” shows the pattern in a different way, although there’s a slight peculiarity in the peak for \$30 to \$39.99 libraries being to the right of that for \$40 to \$57.99 libraries. Note the “peak” for the best-funded libraries: 38 of them circulate more than 30 items per capita.

Changes in circulation per capita

| Change Circ/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|-----------------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 20%+ | 278 | 26% | | 62% | \$39.76 |
| 7% to 19% | 131 | 12% | 39% | -24% | \$41.76 |
| 0 to 6% | 109 | 10% | 49% | -33% | \$40.74 |
| -7% to -1% | 135 | 13% | 62% | -26% | \$39.62 |
| -17% to -8% | 150 | 14% | 76% | -20% | \$39.39 |
| < -17% | 249 | 24% | 100% | 40% | \$34.35 |

Table 3.6 Changes in circulation per capita, 2009 to 2011, benchmark view

Table 3.6 also tells a story of extremes—most obviously from the Rel column. To wit, these libraries tended to either increase circulation substantially (more than a quarter saw it rise by at least 20%) or *decrease* circulation substantially (nearly a quarter saw it fall by more than 17%). The randomness of \$/cap median figures suggests that these changes don’t have much to do with spending levels, and that’s borne out by Table 3.7.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | -30% | -14% | 2% | 22% | 70% |
| \$40-\$57 | -32% | -14% | 3% | 24% | 69% |
| \$30-\$39 | -26% | -9% | -1% | 25% | 72% |
| \$20-\$29 | -32% | -19% | 0% | 19% | 45% |
| \$1-\$19 | -46% | -26% | -7% | 19% | 92% |
| Overall | -33% | -16% | 0% | 22% | 66% |

Table 3.7 Changes in circulation per capita, 2009 to 2011, budget view

Two noteworthy things about this table: the nearly random figures *within* any column, and the high deviations on either side of median.

Visits Per Capita

| Visits/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|------------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 9+ | 329 | 31% | | 68% | \$66.31 |
| 7 to 8 | 164 | 16% | 47% | 25% | \$39.67 |
| 5 to 6 | 179 | 17% | 64% | -15% | \$37.53 |
| 3 to 4 | 168 | 16% | 80% | -34% | \$31.42 |
| 2 | 85 | 8% | 88% | -34% | \$23.02 |
| < 2 | 127 | 12% | 100% | -3% | \$13.61 |

Table 3.8 Visits per capita in 2011, benchmark view

As with circulation, so with visits—only more so. Nearly half of these libraries fall into the top two ranges. While median spending per capita rises consistently (and in the top row *dramatically*) with visits, there's not a statistical correlation overall between the two.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | 5.9 | 8.5 | 13.0 | 19.8 | 29.9 |
| \$40-\$57 | 4.1 | 5.5 | 7.8 | 10.6 | 15.6 |
| \$30-\$39 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 6.0 | 7.4 | 9.5 |
| \$20-\$29 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 6.1 | 9.7 |
| \$1-\$19 | 0.6 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 3.9 | 6.0 |
| Overall | 1.7 | 3.6 | 6.7 | 10.5 | 18.3 |

Table 3.9 Visits per capita in 2011, budget view

Nearly three-quarters of the best funded very small libraries have enough visits per capita to fall into the top benchmark range—that's striking, as is the fact that the top quarter of those libraries have more than twice as many visits per capita.

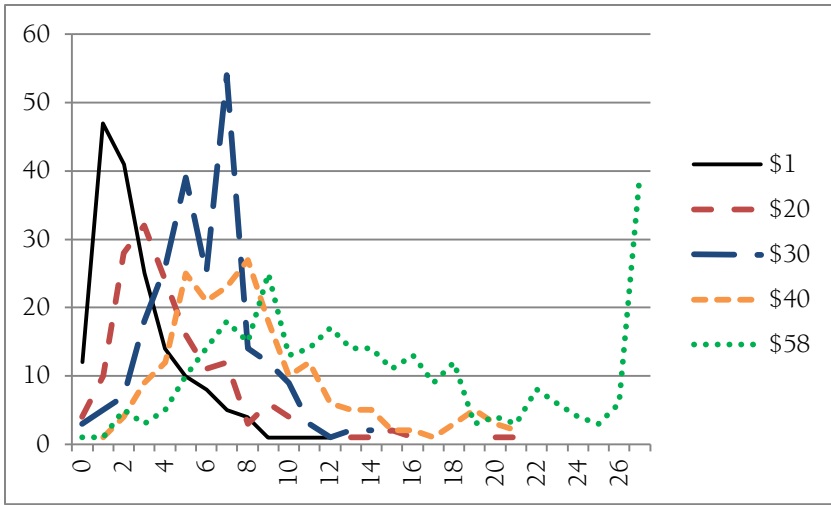


Figure 3.3 Visits per capita (rounded) occurrence by spending category

Figure 3.3 groups together all libraries with more than 26 visits—which, as with circulation, is a substantial portion of the best-funded libraries. In this case, the peaks and curves are consistent for all spending categories.

While there's no statistical correlation between specific spending per capita and visits per capita (albeit a strong correlation between *ranges* of spending and visits per capita), there's a *very* strong correlation between visits per capita and circulation per capita. (This correlation is very high across all libraries, but it's even a little higher than usual for these libraries.) The coefficient is 0.76. Figure 3.4 offers a scatterplot; in this case, the vertical axis is visits per capita and the horizontal is circulation per capita.

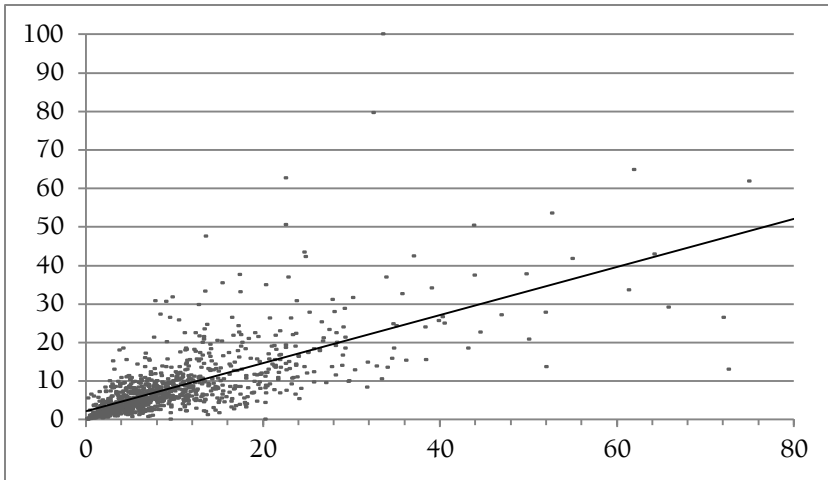


Figure 3.4 Visits per capita (vertical) plotted against circulation per capita

Changes in visits per capita

| Change Vis/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel |
|----------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| 20%+ | 296 | 28% | | 61% |
| 7% to 19% | 148 | 14% | 42% | -8% |
| 0 to 6% | 132 | 13% | 55% | -21% |
| -7 to -1% | 116 | 11% | 66% | -34% |
| -17% to -8% | 136 | 13% | 79% | -23% |
| < -17% | 224 | 21% | 100% | 20% |

Table 3.11 Changes in visits per capita, 2009 to 2011, benchmark view

The smallest libraries tend to extremes at both ends, with nearly half of the libraries either showing sharp increases or sharp decreases.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | -31% | -10% | 4% | 24% | 68% |
| \$40-\$57 | -23% | -11% | 6% | 32% | 65% |
| \$30-\$39 | -30% | -11% | 2% | 25% | 81% |
| \$20-\$29 | -36% | -18% | -1% | 18% | 40% |
| \$1-\$19 | -48% | -25% | -4% | 16% | 52% |
| Overall | -34% | -13% | 2% | 24% | 63% |

Table 3.12 Changes in visits per capita, 2009 to 2011, budget view

Table 3.12 does show stronger *positive* changes in better-funded categories and slightly larger negative changes in less-funded categories, but it's mostly another case of extremes on both sides.

Reference Transactions Per Capita

| Ref/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|-----------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 1.3+ | 216 | 21% | | 17% | \$64.73 |
| 0.8-1.2 | 101 | 10% | 30% | -33% | \$48.47 |
| 0.5-0.7 | 163 | 15% | 46% | -5% | \$39.62 |
| 0.25-0.44 | 152 | 14% | 60% | -28% | \$38.92 |
| 0.1-0.24 | 164 | 16% | 76% | -6% | \$35.88 |
| < 0.1 | 256 | 24% | 100% | 61% | \$26.98 |

Table 3.13 Reference transactions per capita in 2011, benchmark view

This is a tough area. While slightly more libraries in this size range had strong reference activity than one might expect, even more had almost no reference activity (and, in fact, several dozen either reported no reference transactions at all or fewer than five). There's a moderate correlation (0.40) between spending per capita and reference transactions per capita, but it's not graphable.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | 0.09 | 0.34 | 0.97 | 2.39 | 4.74 |
| \$40-\$57 | 0.06 | 0.14 | 0.48 | 0.99 | 1.73 |
| \$30-\$39 | 0.05 | 0.14 | 0.49 | 0.75 | 1.70 |
| \$20-\$29 | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.16 | 0.62 | 1.22 |
| \$1-\$19 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.36 | 0.76 |
| Overall | 0.02 | 0.10 | 0.41 | 1.02 | 2.44 |

Table 3.14 Reference transactions per capita in 2011, budget view

Table 3.14 certainly shows higher activity with more spending, with the \$30 to \$57.99 ranges being very similar and sharply different than those above or below.

No graphs seem to make sense for this measure.

Changes in reference transactions per capita

| Change Ref/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel |
|----------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| 40%+ | 237 | 23% | | 37% |
| 10% to 39% | 166 | 16% | 38% | -9% |
| 0 to 9% | 116 | 11% | 49% | -21% |
| -14% to -1% | 167 | 16% | 65% | -18% |
| -34% to -15% | 117 | 11% | 76% | -29% |
| < -34% | 249 | 24% | 100% | 39% |

Table 3.15 Changes in reference transactions from 2009 to 2011, benchmark

Another case of extremes—a good showing at the top but *twice* the typical percentage of libraries at the bottom. The budget view for these changes does not appear to be useful.

Program Attendance Per Capita

| Attend/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|------------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 0.8+ | 366 | 35% | | 102% | \$58.48 |
| 0.5-0.7 | 158 | 15% | 50% | -8% | \$39.62 |
| 0.3-0.4 | 133 | 13% | 62% | -38% | \$40.82 |
| 0.2 | 86 | 8% | 71% | -43% | \$31.12 |
| 0.1 | 107 | 10% | 81% | -38% | \$28.92 |
| < 0.1 | 201 | 19% | 100% | 23% | \$23.61 |

Table 3.16 Program attendance per capita in 2011, benchmark view

The biggest extreme is a healthy one: *twice* the usual percentage of libraries with at least 0.8 attendance per capita—and fully half the libraries in the top two ranges.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | 0.15 | 0.47 | 1.08 | 2.35 | 4.47 |
| \$40-\$57 | 0.10 | 0.29 | 0.56 | 1.16 | 1.98 |
| \$30-\$39 | 0.05 | 0.19 | 0.57 | 0.79 | 1.32 |
| \$20-\$29 | 0.03 | 0.09 | 0.23 | 0.53 | 1.23 |
| \$1-\$19 | 0.00 | 0.04 | 0.10 | 0.32 | 0.66 |
| Overall | 0.04 | 0.14 | 0.49 | 1.09 | 2.32 |

Table 3.17 Program attendance per capita in 2011, budget view

More than half of the best-funded libraries had more than one program attendance per capita, with the top 10% having more than 4.4.

Program attendance per capita correlates moderately (0.32) with spending per capita and strongly (0.51) with circulation per capita—but even more strongly (0.67) with visits per capita, which makes sense in its own way. Figure 3.5 shows that correlation, with one library removed for having more than 25 attendance per capita and two with more than 80 visits per capita.

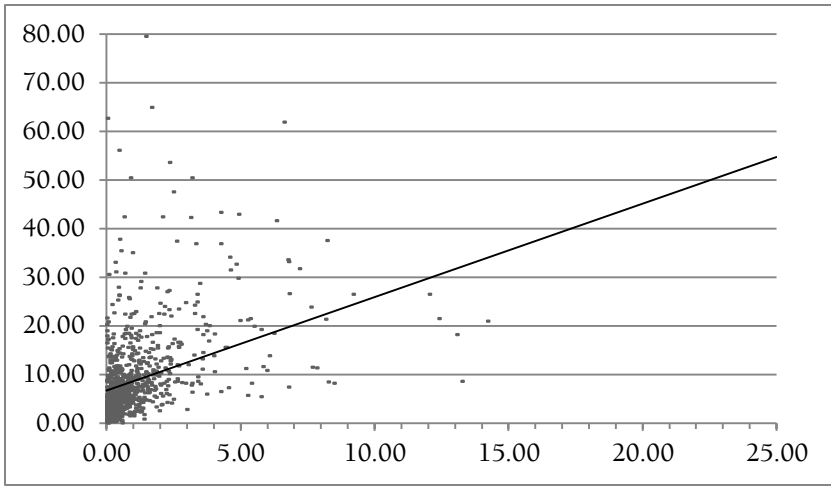


Figure 3.5 Program attendance per capita (horizontal) plotted against visits per capita

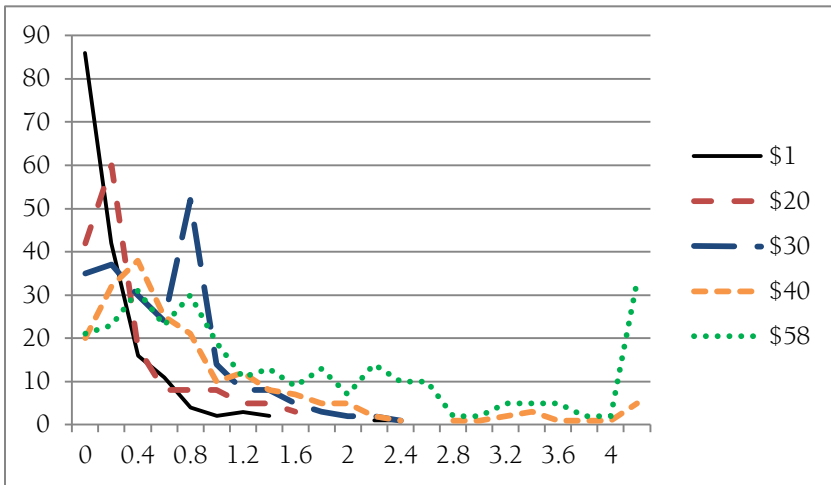


Figure 3.6 Program attendance per cap (to nearest 0.2) occurrence by spending cat.

As with any scattergraphs, the straight line in Figure 3.5 shows the trendline; note that there is a dot on that line at 22.92 attendance per capita. Figure 3.6 rounds program attendance to the nearest two-tenths and lumps together all figures higher than 4.0. This is another case where the (relatively low) peak for \$40-\$57.99 is to the left of the peak for \$30-\$39.99 (and the “peak” for the best-funded libraries consists of 33 libraries exceeding 4.1 attendance per capita).

Changes in program attendance from 2009 to 2011

| Change Att/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel |
|----------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| 55% + | 290 | 28% | | 61% |
| 22% to 54% | 116 | 11% | 39% | -26% |
| 4% to 21% | 125 | 12% | 50% | -34% |
| -10% to 3% | 139 | 13% | 64% | -22% |
| -30% to -11% | 118 | 11% | 75% | -33% |
| < -30% | 264 | 25% | 100% | 52% |

Table 3.18 Changes in program attendance, 2009 to 2011, benchmark view

Bulge at the top, bulge at the bottom: the typical story for this group of libraries. The budget view doesn't add much information (and one figure is a placeholder—10% of the worst-funded libraries went from *no* reported program attendance in 2009 to some in 2011), so it doesn't appear.

Personal Computer Use Per Capita

| PC Use/cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|------------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|
| 2.3 + | 442 | 42% | | 145% | \$53.30 |
| 1.5 to 2.2 | 146 | 14% | 56% | -12% | \$41.90 |
| 1.1 to 1.4 | 93 | 9% | 65% | -44% | \$36.67 |
| 0.8 to 1.0 | 83 | 8% | 73% | -49% | \$30.89 |
| 0.4 to 0.7 | 107 | 10% | 83% | -52% | \$26.89 |
| < 0.4 | 181 | 17% | 100% | 18% | \$20.88 |

Table 3.19 PC use per capita in 2011, benchmark view

Personal computers in very small libraries get used a *lot*.

That's the message I get from Table 3.19, both the 42% in the % column and the astonishing 145% in the Rel column. There's a slight bulge at the bottom (and, in fact, 51 of those 181 libraries reported no PC use at all), but the main story here is at the top. Indeed, 147 of the libraries, around 14%, reported at least five PC uses per capita, more than twice the cutoff for the top range.

Spending per capita again rises consistently with PC usage, but there's only a moderate (0.39) correlation. There's a strong correlation (0.63) between circulation per capita and PC use per capita—and a *very* strong (0.73) correlation between visits and PC use—even stronger than the correlation between visits and program attendance.

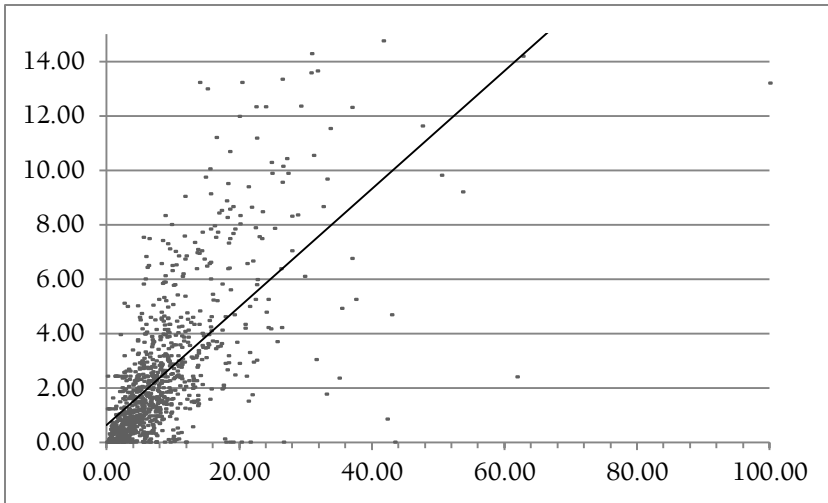


Figure 3.7 PC use per capita (vertical) plotted against visits per capita (horizontal)

To make Figure 3.7 a little more readable, I've omitted sixteen libraries reporting more than 15 PC uses per capita.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | 0.84 | 1.89 | 3.52 | 6.40 | 11.23 |
| \$40-\$57 | 0.67 | 1.35 | 2.27 | 3.67 | 6.57 |
| \$30-\$39 | 0.41 | 0.85 | 1.69 | 2.42 | 3.63 |
| \$20-\$29 | 0.08 | 0.39 | 0.92 | 2.11 | 3.66 |
| \$1-\$19 | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.41 | 1.05 | 2.41 |
| Overall | 0.14 | 0.69 | 1.76 | 3.22 | 6.49 |

Table 3.20 PC use per capita (2011), budget view

Table 3.20 on its own may not be terribly revealing; other than a small glitch at the 90%ile, it's fairly typical.

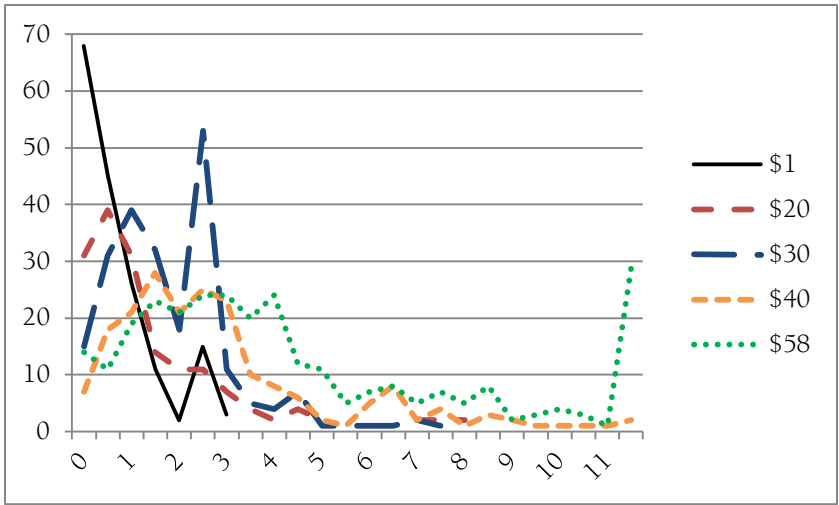


Figure 3.8 PC use (rounded to nearest 0.5) occurrence by spending category

Figure 3.8 may do a better job of showing the relationship between spending and PC use—and because so many of these libraries have a lot of PC use, I rounded figures to the nearest 0.5 (and combined all figures above 11). The \$40 to \$57.99 range is tricky: the peak is relatively low (1.5), but it tapers off slowly to the right, whereas the \$30 to \$39.99 range peaks at 2.5 and drops rapidly after that. The best-funded libraries are all over the place, with 14 rounding to 0, 24 at 2.5 and another 24 at 4—and, to be sure, 29 at 11.5 and higher.

Changes in PC use per capita from 2009 to 2011

| Change in PCU/Cap | Count | % | Cum% | Rel |
|-------------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| 36% + | 284 | 27% | | 59% |
| 12% to 35% | 136 | 13% | 40% | -15% |
| 0 to 11% | 172 | 16% | 56% | 6% |
| -14% to -1% | 115 | 11% | 67% | -43% |
| -30% to -15% | 133 | 13% | 80% | -25% |
| < -30% | 212 | 20% | 100% | 23% |

Table 3.21 Changes in PC use per capita, 2009 to 2011, benchmark view

No surprise here either: libraries tended to increase significantly or decrease significantly, with relatively fewer libraries in the moderate increase category (12% to 35%) or the moderate decrease categories (-30% to -1%).

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | -42% | -20% | 3% | 41% | 95% |
| \$40-\$57 | -39% | -20% | 6% | 39% | 122% |
| \$30-\$39 | -45% | -23% | 9% | 33% | 158% |
| \$20-\$29 | -70% | -26% | 1% | 53% | 129% |
| \$1-\$19 | -80% | -28% | 0% | 59% | 223% |
| Overall | -51% | -23% | 3% | 42% | 130% |

Table 3.22 Changes in PC use per capita, 2009 to 2011, budget view

Table 3.22 is interesting enough to include—because the columns are all so similar. That is: no matter what the spending range, the bottom 10% decreased substantially, the top 25% increased substantially and the top 10% doubled in use (although the best-funded, already well used, didn't quite achieve that). And the median was essentially unchanged or a very slight increase.

Visits Per Hour

| Visits/hour | Count | % | Cum% | Rel | \$/cap |
|-------------|-------|-----|------|-------|----------|
| 50 + | 0 | 0% | | -100% | |
| 25 to 49 | 6 | 1% | 1% | -97% | \$83.43 |
| 14 to 24 | 12 | 1% | 2% | -93% | \$109.70 |
| 8 to 13 | 87 | 8% | 10% | -49% | \$59.98 |
| 4 to 7 | 303 | 29% | 39% | 50% | \$46.47 |
| < 4 | 644 | 61% | 100% | 308% | \$34.94 |

Table 3.23 Visits per hour in 2011, benchmark view

While Table 3.23 may seem wildly incongruous, it's actually quite predictable. These very small libraries serve very few patrons. By and large, they are reasonably well funded—and have reasonably good schedules (with some exceptions). Many are open more than 1,000 hours per year; some are open more than 2,000. Combine those factors and it's predictable that visits per hour will be on the low side, even though visits per capita are on the high side: After all, if 800 people visit 10 times each in a library that's open 2,000 hours a year, that's only four visits per hour. I'm inclined to say that, with only six libraries in the second-highest range, the fact that median spending is lower for that range than for the next range down (also a tiny number of libraries) is meaningless—and, indeed, given that nearly two-thirds of the libraries are in the bottom range, the whole discussion may be meaningless. Libraries with good schedules and very few users won't be full of people most of the time: No surprise.

| \$/cap | 10%ile | 25%ile | Median | 75%ile | 90%ile |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| \$58+ | 5.9 | 8.5 | 13.0 | 19.8 | 29.9 |
| \$40-\$57 | 4.1 | 5.5 | 7.8 | 10.6 | 15.6 |
| \$30-\$39 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 6.0 | 7.4 | 9.5 |
| \$20-\$29 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 6.1 | 9.7 |
| \$1-\$19 | 0.6 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 3.9 | 6.0 |
| Overall | 1.7 | 3.6 | 6.7 | 10.5 | 18.3 |

Table 3.24 Visits per hour in 2011, budget view

Given the discussion above, it may be surprising that Table 3.24 isn't all that unusual. On the other hand, there's no statistical correlation between spending per capita and visits per hour. There's a moderate (0.41) correlation between circulation per capita and visits per hour—and a strong (0.59) correlation between visits per capita and visits per hour.

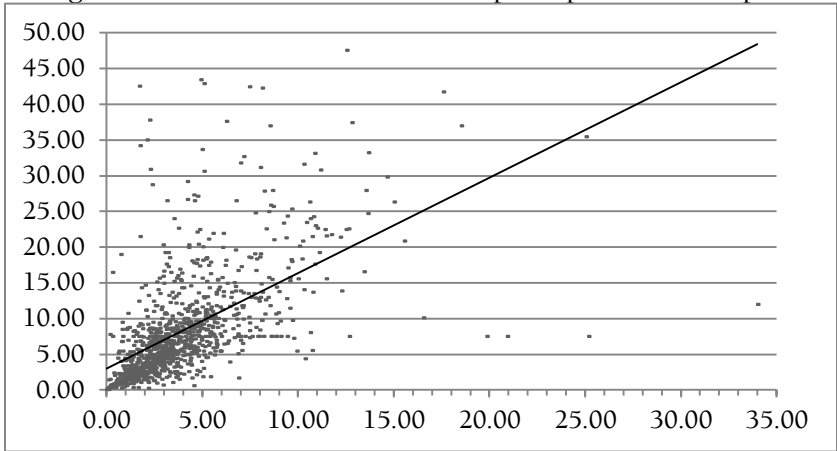


Figure 3.9 Visits per hour (horizontal) plotted against visits per capita (vertical)

Figure 3.9 shows that correlation, omitting 11 libraries with more than 50 visits per capita (that is, roughly a visit each week or more *across all potential patrons*).

Changes in visits per hour from 2009 to 2011

| Change vis/hour | Count | % | Cum% | Rel |
|-----------------|-------|-----|------|------|
| 23%+ | 218 | 21% | | 30% |
| 8% to 22% | 147 | 14% | 35% | -15% |
| 0 to 7% | 149 | 14% | 49% | -26% |
| -6 to -1% | 119 | 11% | 60% | -25% |
| -15 to -7% | 147 | 14% | 74% | -11% |
| < -15% | 272 | 26% | 100% | 46% |

Table 3.25 Changes in visits per hour from 2009 to 2011, benchmark view

About one-fifth of the libraries got significantly busier, whether because of reduced hours or increased usage; about one-fifth got significantly less busy. It's the typical "bulge at each end" distribution for these libraries, but with somewhat smaller bulges. The budget view doesn't show anything interesting.

Closing Notes

The overall picture of these smallest libraries is a misshapen bowl: low in the center, higher on one side than the other. Which is to say that a high percentage of these libraries do particularly well on most measures (except visits per hour, where "well" is a tricky term) and a *slightly* high percentage do poorly in some cases, with relatively few libraries in the middle.

Overall? America's smallest libraries, taken as a whole, appear to serve their typically tiny communities very well—and they may be more essential to those communities than some larger libraries.

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