

Talking Points Two – (ALA) American Library Association

Why Support your Local Library?

- In a world where knowledge is power, libraries make everyone more powerful.
- Libraries bring people and ideas together. Think of the library as the living room of your community.
- Libraries are unique. Where else can you have access to nearly anything on CD, DVD, the Web or in print – as well as personal service and assistance in finding it?
- Libraries help bridge the divide between those who have access to information and those who do not. Families making less than \$15,000 annually are two to three times more likely to rely on library computers than those earning more than \$75,000.
- Nearly 73% of libraries are their communities' only source of free computer and Internet access- which rises to 82% in rural areas.
- Libraries don't just offer the hardware, but also offer the expertise of librarians in helping teach people how to use the Internet and find the information they need quickly. While Google can give you 50,000 responses to your inquiry, your librarian can help you find the one answer you need.
- Libraries are part of the American Dream. They offer free access to all. They bring opportunity to all.
- Libraries and librarians provide free and equal access to information for people of all ages and backgrounds – in schools, on college and university campuses and in communities large and small.
- Libraries are for everyone, everywhere.

Library Use

- Library use continues to climb. Sixty-eight percent of adults in the U.S. have public library cards, the greatest number since the ALA began collecting this data in 1990. (2008 Harris poll: <http://tinyurl.com/9ewpcc>)
- Americans visit libraries more than 1.3 billion times and check out more than 2.1 billion items each year. Users turn to their libraries for free books, to borrow DVDs, to learn new computer skills, to conduct job searches and more.
- Americans go to school, public and academic libraries 50 percent more often than they go to the movies.
- A 2006 poll conducted by the American Library Association found that 92 percent of respondents expect libraries to be needed in the future, despite the increased availability of information on the Internet.
- Nationally, the average user takes out more than seven books a year . . . but users turn to their libraries for more than books: to borrow DVDs, to learn new computer skills, to conduct job searches, and to participate in the activities of local and community organizations.
- Nearly all Americans (96 percent) – even if they are not regular library visitors – agree that libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. They support our public education and lifelong learning.

Quotable Facts:

- There are now more public library buildings in the U.S. than there are McDonald's – a total of 16,592, including branches.
- Library use continues to rise – public library visits exceed 1.3 billion, and libraries circulate more items than Fed Ex ships – more than 2.1 billion books, CDs, DVDs and more.
- Americans check out on average more than seven books a year. They spend about \$31 for the public library – about the cost of one hardcover book.
- Americans spend about two-and-a-half times as much on salty snacks as they do on public libraries.

Library Funding

- Libraries and librarians can't live on love alone.
- Millions of people pass through the library each year, but without adequate support, these resources may not be there when you need them.
- Like many Americans, due to recent economic downturn, many libraries are being forced to do more with less.
- Libraries in almost every state have been affected by state funding cuts.
- Librarians know shrinking budgets demand a lot of hard choices be made. When it comes time to make those decisions, we just ask elected officials and the public to think about how many people turn to us for job searches, free Internet access, health care information and for free resources for education and career development.
- Your ability to get information shouldn't depend on your ability to pay for it.
- If people speak up and speak out they can save their libraries.

Library funding fast facts:

- College libraries receive less than two cents of every dollar spent on higher education.
- Americans spend nearly 10 times as much money on home video games (\$9.9 billion) as they do on school library materials for their children (\$1 billion).
- School library media centers spend an average of \$10 per child for books - less than half the cost of one hardcover school library book.

Economic Value of Libraries

- Investing in libraries is an investment in education and lifelong learning.
- Libraries are among the most effective of all public services, serving more than 2/3 of the public with less than 2 percent of all tax dollars.
- Public libraries are a bargain. Nationally, the average cost to the taxpayer for access to this wide range of public-library resources is \$31 a year, about the cost of one hardcover book.

Return on investment examples:

- Seattle, WA – Visits to the new public library have increased King County tourism. Increased tourism of one percent yields \$1 billion in new economic activity statewide over 25 years.
- In Maryland, 90 percent of the state's citizens say public libraries are "a good investment." More

than 40 percent of the citizens think of public libraries as an economic anchor, potentially attracting "good businesses" to their area.

- In Florida, for every dollar of public support spent on public libraries, income or wages increases by \$12.66, and returned \$6.54 for every dollar invested.
- In South Carolina, the total direct and indirect return on investment for every \$1 spent on the state's public libraries by South Carolina state and local governments is \$4.48 - nearly 350 percent.

Libraries and the Economy

- In times of economic hardship, Americans turn to – and depend on – their libraries and librarians.
- Libraries are part of the solution when a community is struggling economically. From free access to books and online resources for families to library business centers that help support entrepreneurship and retraining, libraries support lifelong learning.
- Libraries are America's great information equalizers – the only place people of all ages and backgrounds can find and freely use such a diversity of resources, along with the expert guidance of librarians.
- As more and more Americans look for employment, libraries are helping level the playing field for job seekers. Only 44 percent of the top 100 U.S. retailers accepted in-store paper applications in 2006- down from 68 percent in 2004. Library staff report that many patrons are turning to library computers and Internet access to find work, apply for jobs online, type resumes and cover letters and open email accounts.
- Many libraries nationwide design and offer programs tailored to meet local community economic needs, providing residents with guidance (including sessions with career advisers), training and workshops in resume writing and interviewing, job-search resources, and connections with outside agencies that offer training and job placement.
- During times of economic downturn, libraries see more users because people cut back on entertainment. People are able to rent movies for free and check out CDs, use databases and download audio books.
- A 2002 ALA study contracted with the University of Illinois Library Research Center (LRC) highlights the increase of library usage in the wake of a recession. This study found that circulation in March 2001 was 8.3 percent higher than would be expected from the trend observed since January 1997.
- When the economy is down, library use is up. Unfortunately, at the same time, tight city and state budgets are closing library doors and reducing access when it's needed most.