

Hennen's American Public Library Ratings 2006

24 libraries make their top 100 debuts by **Thomas J. Hennen Jr.**

Naperville (Ill.) and North Canton (Ohio) Public Libraries repeated this year as the top-ranked libraries in their population categories, while Santa Clara County (Calif.) Library makes its return to the top after slipping to second last year. In their categories, Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library leaped to number one from number four last year, while Monroe County (Ind.) Public Library rose to the number two spot from fifth. Altogether, 24 new libraries appeared on the top 100 list.

This is the seventh edition of Hennen's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR) since 1999. For this edition, let's start with the year in review:

- On average, for every dollar spent on operating costs, 14 cents is spent on capital. That continues a decade-plus trend of 13 to 15 cents for capital for every dollar of operating expenditures.

- Total operating expenditures went up 4.2% while collection expenditures declined 0.8%.

- Circulation continued its multiyear climb with a 2.3% rise.

- Visits grew faster than circulation, with a 3% increase.

- Reference answers saw a sluggish 0.7% increase, but that was better than the declines posted in the last several years.

- The most noticeable decline was in the availability of magazine subscriptions per capita, a 5.3% drop. That is probably a testimony to continuing library reliance on online sources in preference to their print counterparts.

- Back in the mid-'70s, when I went to graduate school, numbers from *Wheeler and Goldhor's Practical Administration of Public Libraries* represented the gold standard for library planning. They recommended that 20% of a public library budget should go toward materials. More recently, the common wisdom has pointed to 15%. The latest data shows another in a continuing decline from 13.9% to 13.2%. Practical experience points to the pressure to meet rising costs for health insurance and energy costs as the culprit. But the trend raises the question as to when we will see the light at the end of this tunnel.

State comparisons

Ohio retains its place at the head of state-by-state rankings. Its population-weighted score of 728 was more than double that of last-rated Mississippi. In the seven HAPLR ratings since 1999, over 20% of the

Nationwide Operating Data

Data	2005 HAPLR	2006 HAPLR	Change
Population	282,378,836	285,579,896	1.1%
Full time equivalent (fte) staff	136,166	136,014	-0.1%
Collection expenditures	\$1,152,393,711	\$1,142,839,506	-0.8%
Operating expenditures	\$8,288,496,412	\$8,632,693,011	4.2%
Book volumes	800,187,257	803,013,857	0.4%
Subscriptions	1,900,352	1,820,422	-4.2%
Hours open	36,764,726	35,915,538	-2.3%
Library visits	1,282,213,259	1,320,647,162	3.0%
Reference	301,791,444	303,914,504	0.7%
Circulation	1,962,233,697	2,008,090,565	2.3%
Expenditure per capita	\$29.35	\$30.23	3.0%
Percent of budget to materials	13.9%	13.2%	-4.8%
Materials expenditure per capita	\$4.08	\$4.00	-1.9%
Fte staff per 1,000 population	0.482	0.476	-1.2%
Periodicals per 1,000 residents	6.730	6.374	-5.3%
Volumes per capita	2.834	2.812	-0.8%
Operating expenditure per circulation	4.224	4.299	1.8%
Visits per capita	4.541	4.624	1.8%
Book collection turnover	2.452	2.501	2.0%
Circulation per fte staff hour	6.928	7.098	2.5%
Circulation per capita	6.949	7.032	1.2%
Reference per capita	1.069	1.064	-0.4%
Circulation per hour	53.373	55.911	4.8%
Visits per hour	34.876	36.771	5.4%
Circulation per visit	1.530	1.521	-0.6%

top 10 slots for each population category went to Ohio libraries. Since 1999 more than half of all the libraries in the top 10 slots for each of the 10 population categories were from just five states: Ohio, New York, Indiana, Illinois, and Minnesota (in that order).

Repeat performances

Only one library ranked first in its population category for all seven ratings: Naperville (Ill.) Public Library. Washington-Centerville (Ohio) Public Library placed number one six times before dropping to second this year. Santa Clara County (Calif.) Library earned its fifth first-place ranking this year. Gaining three number one rankings were: Lakewood, North Canton, and Twinsburg Public Libraries in Ohio; Denver Public Library; Hagerstown-Jefferson Township (Ind.) Public Library;

and Flomaton (Ala.) Public Library. Other top performers in the rankings over the years are detailed on the HAPLR website, www.haplr-index.com.

Ranking methodology

The methodology for the ratings has not changed since 1999. The data for this edition was filed by 9,076 libraries in 2005, collected by 50 state library agencies, and compiled at the national level by the Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS) and then published by the National Center for Education Statistics. Most of the data includes activities in calendar year 2003, although the fiscal years vary. Most of the HAPLR rating criteria are about staffing levels, funding levels, hours open, and other noncirculation measures; in fact, 60% of the ratings criteria are not circulation-related. The HAPLR Index includes 15 factors

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Population	Rank	Library	State	Score
Over 500,000				
	1	Cuyahoga County Public Library	OH	861
	2	Multnomah County Library	OR	855
	3	Columbus Metropolitan Library	OH	848
	4	Denver Public Library	CO	842
	5	Baltimore County Public Library	MD	807
250,000–499,999				
	1	Santa Clara County Library	CA	915
	2	Howard County Library	MD	897
	3	St. Charles City-County Library District	MO	868
	4	Johnson County Library	KS	839
	5	Madison Public Library	WI	811
100,000–249,999				
	1	Naperville Public Library	IL	923
	2	Monroe County Public Library	IN	879
	3	Santa Clara City Library	CA	873
	4	Medina County District Library	OH	870
	5	Arapahoe Library District	CO	861
50,000–99,999				
	1	Lakewood Public Library	OH	956
	2	Washington-Centerville Public Library	OH	954
	3	Carmel Clay Public Library	IN	915
	4	Euclid Public Library	OH	907
	5	Cleveland Heights–University Heights Public Library	OH	899
25,000–49,999				
	1	North Canton Public Library	OH	929
	2	Westlake Porter Public Library	OH	926
	3	Wadsworth Public Library	OH	900
	4	Upper Arlington Public Library	OH	898
	5	Southwest Public Libraries	OH	894

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10,000–24,999				
1	Twinsburg Public Library	OH	954	
2	Wickliffe Public Library	OH	937	
3	Hays Public Library	KS	926	
4	Way Public Library	OH	917	
5	Rocky River Public Library	OH	907	
5,000–9,999				
1	Columbiana Public Library	OH	956	
2	Bridgeport Public Library	WV	926	
3	Wright Memorial Public Library	OH	925	
4	Kinsman Free Public Library	OH	921	
5	New Cumberland Public Library	PA	903	
2,500–4,999				
1	Grand Valley Public Library	OH	933	
2	Mt. Pleasant Public Library	UT	921	
3	Bell Memorial Public Library	IN	912	
4	James Kennedy Public Library	IA	910	
5	Yoakum County/Cecil Bickley Library	TX	896	
1,000–2,4999				
1	Sodus Free Library	NY	934	
2	Flomaton Public Library	AL	929	
3	Centerburg Public Library	OH	907	
4	Riceville Public Library	IA	902	
5	Utica Public Library District	IL	891	
Under 1,000				
1	Hardtner Public Library	KS	907	
2	Mary E. Tippitt Memorial Library	TN	895	
3	New Woodstock Free Library	NY	890	
4	Poland Public Library	NY	888	
5	Washburn Public Library	TN	888	

including circulation, staffing, materials, reference service, and funding levels.

Electronic measures

Much as we want to do so, we still cannot incorporate electronic usage data into the HAPLR ratings. The data submitted by libraries is still far too flawed. Either the FSCS must improve its questions or the libraries must improve their understanding of those questions. From last year to this, the rate of “users of electronic resources” rose 3% nationwide, but that followed a 5,797% (that’s right) increase the year before!

I still regret not being able to use data about electronic resources. The data is simply not there. It is likely that in the future, additional measures can be added to the FSCS data to begin to evaluate such other library services as internet use, electronic services, and non-print services.

It is not only a question of electronic resources, of course. The weighting and relationship between several other measures also need review. Whenever I think about changing the ratings, though, I worry about Coca-Cola’s venture that led it back to Classic Coke. I wonder if I would have to do a New HAPLR and a Classic HAPLR. Not surprisingly, libraries are asking more often for comparisons to prior-year data. Changing the factors would make that impossible. ☒



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