

America's Star Libraries: Top-Rated Libraries | LJ Index 2017

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We are pleased to announce the results of the tenth edition of the *LJ* Index of Public Library Service, sponsored by Baker & Taylor's CollectConnect. The *LJ* Index rates U.S. public libraries based on selected per capita output measures.

The 2017 Index derives from data recently released by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for FY15.

This year, 7,409 U.S. public libraries qualified to be rated in the Index. In this edition, there are 259 Star Libraries, each receiving three-Star, four-Star, or five-Star designations.

This year marks the tenth edition of the Star Library Ratings and the *LJ* Index of Public Library Service, sponsored by Baker & Taylor's CollectConnect. The *LJ* Index compares U.S. public libraries with their spending peers based on per capita measures of service output. When my late colleague Ray Lyons and I conceived this project, we expected more new output measures to be developed and adopted on an ongoing basis. While it has taken longer than we would have wished, it is finally beginning to happen. Wi-Fi access usage should be added next year. Library website visits and uses of Maker spaces are being

discussed. Also, we need to develop more measures of how residents rely on their libraries as gathering places in which to create and sustain community. It will be exciting to see how the addition of new output measures changes the composition of the Star Libraries group and how it better illuminates the increasing variety of ways in which libraries excel at serving their constituents.

From 2009 through 2015, the four measures included were circulation, library visits, program attendance, and public Internet computer use. *LJ* Index scores are produced by measuring the proportional relationships between each library’s statistics and the averages for its expenditure category.

Last year, circulation of electronic materials, or e-circ, became the fifth statistic to contribute to a library’s *LJ* Index score. While we had hoped to add Wi-Fi sessions this year, that was not to be.

TABLE 1 MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS (SD) OF *LJ* INDEX STATISTICS BY EXPENDITURE CATEGORY, 2017 (BASED ON FY15 DATA)

PER CAPITA SERVICE OUTPUT EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	TOTAL CIRCULATION		CIRCULATION OF ELECTRONIC MATERIALS		LIBRARY VISITS		TOTAL PROGRAM ATTENDANCE		PUBLIC INTERNET COMPUTER USE	
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	S.D
\$30M+	10.35	6.59	1.16	0.90	5.16	1.99	0.36	0.19	1.18	0.52
\$10M-\$29.9M	10.81	7.85	1.12	2.30	5.71	2.93	0.40	0.26	1.16	0.64
\$5M-\$9.9M	10.88	7.86	0.84	0.96	6.10	3.98	0.49	0.46	1.27	1.53
\$1M-\$4.9M	9.63	8.31	0.69	2.76	6.39	5.32	0.58	0.80	1.16	1.36
\$400K-\$999.9K	8.58	7.04	0.56	1.05	6.78	6.43	0.61	0.70	1.23	1.44
\$200K-\$399.9K	7.33	6.29	0.44	0.61	5.88	5.36	0.57	0.75	1.17	1.63
\$100K-\$199.9K	7.21	5.97	0.40	0.60	5.64	5.02	0.59	0.74	1.19	1.43
\$50K-\$99.9K	6.23	4.73	0.36	0.62	4.70	3.78	0.54	0.69	1.16	1.37
\$10K-\$49.9K	4.07	3.48	0.25	1.02	3.20	2.94	0.37	0.72	0.90	1.14
TOTAL	7.70	6.75	0.50	1.45	5.69	5.17	0.55	0.73	1.16	1.41

KEY: M-Millions K-Thousands

Why not wi-fi?

When the 2016 *LJ* Index was released, we were optimistic about being able to add Wi-Fi sessions to the five existing per capita statistics in 2017. Unfortunately, that turned out not to be possible this year after all, because the percentage of responding libraries that reported it once again fell below the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) response rate standard of 80%.

For FY15, the data year on which the 2017 *LJ* Index is based, only the largest and best-funded libraries in the nation—those spending \$30 million or more—met the 80% standard. For all of the other expenditure categories, only about three-fourths of libraries reported Wi-Fi sessions.

There are, however, significant differences in response rate for Wi-Fi sessions by state. For the FY15 data year, 100% response rates were achieved by ten states: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Texas, and West Virginia.

Response rates exceeding IMLS’s 80% standard but falling below 100% were achieved by 13 states—in descending order by response rate: Michigan, Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Mississippi, Indiana, North Dakota, New Mexico, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Alabama.

Response rates falling below the 80% standard but exceeding 50% were reported by 19 states—in descending order: Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Minnesota, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Jersey, California, Florida, Arizona, Massachusetts, Iowa, Wyoming, Montana, Wisconsin, Virginia, North Carolina, New Hampshire, and Kansas. Five other states—Washington, Illinois, Maine, Connecticut, and Rhode Island—had response rates between 40% and 6% for Wi-Fi sessions.

TABLE 2 PUBLIC LIBRARIES REPORTING WI-FI SESSIONS BY EXPENDITURE CATEGORY, FY15

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	WI-FI SESSIONS				NUMBER
	REPORTED		NOT REPORTED		
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	
\$30M+	42	86%	7	14%	49
\$10M-\$29.9M	91	78%	25	22%	116
\$5M-\$9.9M	166	76%	53	24%	219
\$1M-\$4.9M	1,075	75%	361	25%	1,436
\$400K-\$999.9K	1,085	75%	358	25%	1,443
\$200K-\$399.9K	908	77%	278	23%	1,186
\$100K-\$199.9K	938	77%	274	23%	1,212
\$50K-\$99.9K	750	75%	252	25%	1,002
\$10K-\$49.9K	542	73%	204	27%	746
TOTAL	5,597	76%	1,812	24%	7,409

In FY15, over 1,800 libraries nationwide were still unable to report Wi-Fi sessions despite that being the second year of the category’s inclusion in the Public Library Survey. (Some states’ survey schedules make it impossible for them to adopt a new measure for the first year that other states report it.)

The issue here is not libraries that do not provide Wi-Fi service—they can simply report zero sessions. Doubtless, many libraries are finding it difficult to count Wi-Fi sessions. IMLS, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, individual state library agencies, and State Data Coordinators—particularly those with response rates below IMLS’s 80% standard—are encouraged to redouble their efforts to support libraries in finding ways to collect this important new measure. While public Internet computer use has long been included in the *LJ* Index, it no longer suffices when many, if not most, users bring their own devices to access digital resources.

As soon as the 80% standard is met nationally, Wi-Fi sessions will be considered seriously for addition to the *LJ* Index. At that point, libraries for which this data cannot be obtained may be disqualified from being rated and, thus, from being considered as Star Libraries.

What's new?

For 2017, 7,409 U.S. public libraries were scored on the *LJ* Index of Public Library Service. This is somewhat higher than last year, in part owing to more libraries reporting the newest output measure, circulation of electronic materials.

Each year, the constellation of Star Libraries changes with the data reported (this year's *LJ* Index derives from data that IMLS released this September for FY15), the movement of public libraries from one spending peer group to another, the relative fortunes of libraries in the same peer group, and the fortunes of individual libraries. Eligible libraries are grouped by total operating expenditures and, within each group, rated based on their differences from the means, or averages, of the five per capita statistics.

Therefore, increases or decreases in a library's statistics relative to the previous year do not necessarily translate into higher or lower *LJ* Index scores or more or fewer Stars. *LJ* Index scores, even for the same expenditure category, cannot be compared meaningfully from year to year.

TABLE 3 PUBLIC LIBRARIES REPORTING WI-FI SESSIONS BY STATE, FY15

STATE	WI-FI SESSIONS				TOTAL
	REPORTED		NOT REPORTED		
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	
AK	30	100%	0	0%	30
AR	54	100%	0	0%	54
DE	21	100%	0	0%	21
GA	63	100%	0	0%	63
NE	108	100%	0	0%	108
NV	20	100%	0	0%	20
NY	685	100%	1	0%	686
OH	242	100%	0	0%	242
TX	517	100%	0	0%	517
WV	88	100%	0	0%	88
MI	371	98%	6	2%	377
KY	117	98%	2	2%	119
MO	137	97%	4	3%	141
LA	64	96%	3	4%	67
PA	385	95%	20	5%	405
SC	38	93%	3	7%	41
MS	46	92%	4	8%	50
IN	185	87%	27	13%	212
ND	39	87%	6	13%	45
NM	55	82%	12	18%	67
SD	63	82%	14	18%	77
TN	141	81%	34	19%	175
AL	160	80%	39	20%	199
OR	81	79%	22	21%	103
ID	62	78%	17	22%	79
UT	47	78%	13	22%	60
MN	94	77%	28	23%	122
CO	72	77%	22	23%	94
OK	74	73%	28	27%	102
NJ	175	69%	80	31%	255
CA	109	65%	58	35%	167
FL	41	65%	22	35%	63
AZ	40	60%	27	40%	67
MA	164	59%	112	41%	276
IA	209	58%	150	42%	359
WY	13	57%	10	43%	23
MT	40	56%	31	44%	71
WI	168	56%	131	44%	299
VA	50	56%	39	44%	89
NC	43	54%	36	46%	79
NH	85	51%	82	49%	167
KS	92	51%	89	49%	181
WA	19	40%	28	60%	47
IL	202	39%	318	61%	520
ME	54	29%	130	71%	184
CT	27	18%	119	82%	146
RI	3	6%	45	94%	48
TOTAL*	5,597	76%	1,812	24%	7,409

*Totals include AS, DC, GU, and HI—all of which are single-library jurisdictions

This year, there are 259 Star Libraries, about one-fifth of which, 54, were not Star Libraries last year. Some 205 of 2016's Star Libraries retain Star status, though their number of Stars may have changed. Among libraries spending \$30 million or more, there are no new Star Libraries for 2017.

Among libraries spending \$10 million–\$29.9 million, there are four new Star Libraries. The lone new four-Star library is Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, KS. There are three new three-Star libraries: Birmingham Public Library, AL; Richland Library, SC; and Hartford Public Library, CT.

Among libraries spending \$5 million–\$9.9 million, there are eight new Star winners. Elmhurst Public Library, IL, is the one new five-Star library, while Palo Alto City Library, CA, is the lone new four-Star library. The remaining six are new three-Star libraries: Barrington Public Library District, IL; Glenview Public Library, IL; La Crosse Public Library, WI; St. Charles Public Library District, IL; Chester County Library, PA; and Genesee District Library, MI.

Among libraries spending \$1 million–\$4.9 million, there are five new Star Libraries. Westlake's Porter Public Library, OH, is a new five-Star facility. In addition, four new three-Star libraries include Bronxville Public Library, NY; Oakwood's Wright Memorial Public Library, OH; Bexley Public Library, OH; and Murray Public Library, UT.

Among libraries spending \$400,000–\$999,999, there are four new three-Star institutions: Chatham's Eldredge Public Library, MA; Northeast Harbor Library, ME; Orleans's Snow Library, MA; and Seward Community Library and Museum, AK.

Among libraries spending \$200,000–\$399,999, there are eight new Star Libraries. The three new four-Star libraries are Ely Public Library, MN; Fairport Harbor Library, OH; and La Grange's Fayette Public Library, TX. The five new three-Star libraries are Cotuit Library, MA; La Junta's Woodruff Memorial Library, CO; Petersburg Public Library, AK; Hot Springs Public Library, SD; and Ridgway Public Library District, CO.

Among libraries spending \$100,000–\$199,999, there are six new Star Libraries. The three new four-Star libraries are Altamont Free Library, NY; Gentry County Library, MO; and Todd County Public Library, KY. The three new three-Star facilities are Dennis Memorial Library Association, MA; Port Orford Public Library, OR; and Oakley Public Library, KS.

Among libraries spending \$50,000–\$99,999, there are nine new Star Libraries. Springlake's Earth Community Library, TX, is the lone new five-Star library. The three new four-Star libraries are Marion City Library, KS; Grant's Hastings Memorial Library, NE; and Moundridge Public Library, KS. The five new three-Star libraries are Columbus Village Library, NM; Baden Memorial Library, PA; Baudette Public Library, MN; Electra Public Library, TX; and De Smet's Hazel L. Meyer Memorial Library, SD.

Among libraries spending \$10,000–\$49,999, there are ten new Star Libraries. The three new four-Star libraries are Lemmon Public Library, SD; Ogema Public Library, WI; and Saint Jo Public Library, TX. The seven new three-Star facilities are Guilford Memorial Library, ME; Ashley Public Library District, IL; Elk Horn Public Library, IA; Louisville Public Library, NE; Loxley Public Library, AL; Mammoth Public Library, AZ; and Parsons Public Library, TN.

More, fewer, and lost Stars

Each year, some libraries that remain in the same expenditure categories earn additional Stars from the previous edition. In this 2017 edition, 59 such Star Libraries moved between the three-, four-, and five-Star ratings. Of those 59, 18 Star winners moved up from three Stars to four, 15 from four Stars to five, and two from three Stars to five.

Three libraries spending \$30 million or more gained a Star between 2016 and 2017: East Baton Rouge Parish Library, LA, went from four to five Stars, and Multnomah County Library, OR, and San Francisco Public Library, CA, went from three to four Stars.

San Mateo County Library, CA, was the only library among those spending \$10 million–\$29.9 million to gain a Star this year—going from three to four.

This year, six libraries spending \$5 million–\$9.9 million gained Stars: Washington-Centerville Public Library, OH, and Oak Park Public Library, IL, went from four to five Stars, and Carmel Clay Public Library, IN; Cerritos Public Library, CA; Libertyville’s Cook Memorial Library, IL; and Pueblo City-County Library District, CO, went from three to four Stars.

Two libraries spending \$1 million–\$4.9 million gained Stars between 2016 and 2017: Cutchogue–New Suffolk Free Library, NY, went from four to five Stars, and Port Jefferson Free Library, NY, went from three to four Stars.

For 2017, four libraries spending \$400,000–\$999,999 libraries gained Stars: Dover Town Library, MA, and West Tisbury Free Public Library, MA, went from four to five Stars, and Lopez Island Library District, WA, and Shelter Island Public Library, NY, went from three to four Stars.

Three libraries spending \$200,000–\$399,999 gained Stars this year: Truro Public Library, MA, went from four to five Stars, and Anna’s Stinson Memorial Library, IL, and Roxana Public Library District, IL, went from three to four Stars.

For 2017, six libraries spending \$100,000–\$199,999 gained Stars over last year: libraries moving from four to five Stars include Atkinson Public Library, NE; Dryden’s Southworth Library Association, NY; Rock Creek Public Library, OH; and Tivoli Free Library, NY. Rogersville Public Library, AL, and Seven Points’ Library at Cedar Creek Lake, TX, moved from three to four Stars.

This year, five libraries spending \$50,000–\$99,999 gained Stars: Elbridge Free Library, NY, and Huachuca City Public Library, AZ, went from four to five Stars, and libraries moving from three to four Stars include Hubbard Public Library, IA; St. Paul Public Library, NE; and Tonto Basin Public Library, AZ.

Five libraries spending \$10,000–\$49,999 gained Stars over last year: Arma City Library, KS, and Ellinwood School Community Library, KS, went from three to five Stars; libraries moving from four to five Stars include Elgin Public Library, IA, and Springer’s Fred Macaron Library, NM; Lanark Public Library, IL, went from three to four Stars.

Other libraries lost Stars between the 2016 and 2017 editions. Without changing expenditure categories, 14 went from five to four Stars and nine went from four to three Stars. One library dropped from five Stars to three.

TABLE 4 PUBLIC LIBRARIES ELIGIBLE FOR THE L/INDEX AND REPEAT AND NEW STAR LIBRARIES, 2009–17 (BASED ON FY06–15 IMLS DATA)

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	NUMBER OF LIBRARIES									
	NOVEMBER 2017 (2015 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2016 (2014 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2015 (2013 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2014 (2012 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2013 (2011 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2012 (2010 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2011 (2009 DATA)	OCTOBER 2010 (2008 DATA)	NOVEMBER 2009 (2007 DATA)	FEBRUARY 2009 (2006 DATA)
\$30M +	49	49	51	47	46	44	48	45	36	31
\$10-29.9M	116	107	112	113	112	114	107	106	98	88
\$5-9.9M	219	222	209	209	198	191	211	186	176	159
\$1-4.9M	1,436	1,401	1,397	1,381	1,367	1,349	1,307	1,282	1,209	1,125
\$400-999.9K	1,443	1,414	1,446	1,394	1,395	1,373	1,377	1,333	1,278	1,247
\$200-399.9K	1,186	1,171	1,209	1,208	1,174	1,170	1,129	1,087	1,113	1,089
\$100-199.9K	1,212	1,180	1,257	1,237	1,251	1,258	1,236	1,204	1,191	1,173
\$50-99.9K	1,002	1,055	1,088	1,122	1,111	1,126	1,145	1,128	1,152	1,115
\$10-49.9K	746	750	894	875	919	945	953	1,036	1,015	1,088
TOTAL LIBRARIES RATED	7,409	7,349	7,663	7,586	7,573	7,570	7,513	7,407	7,268	7,115
LIBRARIES: REPEAT STARS (from prior year)	205	199	207	198	196	203	195	195	208	n/a
LIBRARIES: NEW STARS (no stars prior year)	54	61	54	60	67	59	67	63	50	n/a
TOTAL STARS	259	260	261	258	263	262	262	258	258	n/a

KEY: M—Millions K—Thousands

Changing constellations

Between 2016 and 2017, 14 libraries moved from one expenditure category to another while retaining Star Library status. Of these, ten libraries retained Star Library status despite moving from a lower to a higher expenditure category and in two cases, the reverse.

In the latter case, two libraries retained their five-Star library status despite moving down one expenditure category: Hartington Public Library, NE, from \$100,000–\$199,999 to \$50,000–\$99,999, and Lincoln Public Library, NH, from \$50,000–\$99,999 to \$10,000–\$49,999.

Four libraries maintained their Star status while moving up one expenditure category this year: Cold Spring’s Julia L. Butterfield Memorial Library, NY, five Stars, from \$200,000–\$399,999 to \$400,000–\$999,999; Parker Public Library, AZ, five Stars, from \$100,000–

\$199,999 to \$200,000–\$399,999; Double Springs Public Library, AL, five Stars, from \$10,000–\$49,999 to \$50,000–\$99,999; and Freeman Public Library, SD, four Stars, from \$50,000–\$99,999 to \$100,000–\$199,999.

Three four-Star libraries became five-Star institutions between 2016 and 2017 despite moving up one expenditure category: Richland Community Library, MI, four to five Stars, from \$200,000–\$399,999 to \$400,000–\$999,999; Haslet Public Library, TX, four to five Stars, from \$100,000–\$199,999 to \$200,000–\$399,999; and Pembroke Public Library District, IL, four to five Stars, from \$10,000–\$49,999 to \$50,000–\$99,999.

States with the most and fewest Stars

The 2017 Star Libraries are found in 40 states. The top four states, ranked by their numbers of Star Libraries, are New York, 31; Ohio, 25; Illinois, 22; and California, 13. There is a tie for fifth place between Kansas and Massachusetts, 12 each. The top ten Star Library states are rounded out by Nebraska and Texas, 11 each; Alabama, ten; and Colorado, eight. The remaining 30 Star Library states are scattered across the nation and in every major geographical region.

There are no 2017 Star winners in the District of Columbia or ten states. Of those, four are the Southern states of Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina. Two other Star-less states are in the Rocky Mountain West—Idaho and Wyoming—and another two are Delaware and Hawaii.

In addition to the above, there were no Star Libraries from Maryland or Vermont, because circulation of electronic materials was not reported for all libraries in those states. Hopefully, both states will add this measure next year, so their libraries can once again be scored on the *LJ* Index of Public Library Service and be eligible to be designated as Star Libraries.

Most of the Star-less states have one notable thing in common: a relatively small number of public library jurisdictions. DC and Hawaii have only one each—DC's being essentially a city library and Hawaii, having a single statewide system. Delaware and Idaho have relatively small numbers of libraries, owing to their relatively small populations.

Counting County libraries

A conversation with former Georgia deputy state librarian and retired Cherokee regional library director, GA, Diana Ray Tope revealed a major reason why the four Southern states listed above have no Star Libraries. All of those states have far more of certain types of large units of service than is the norm among all *LJ* Index–eligible libraries, or among Star Libraries.

TABLE 5 PER CAPITA OUTPUT MEASURES BY SELECTED LEGAL BASIS TYPE, 2017 (2015 DATA)

SELECTED LEGAL BASIS TYPE	CIRCULATION	ELECTRONIC CIRCULATION	LIBRARY VISITS	TOTAL PROGRAM ATTENDANCE	PUBLIC INTERNET COMPUTER USE
City	8.32	0.51	6.15	0.56	1.24
County	5.32	0.38	3.97	0.33	0.92
Library District	8.28	0.57	5.98	0.60	1.17
Multijurisdictional	4.72	0.30	3.88	0.36	0.88
Nonprofit Association	6.80	0.52	5.26	0.64	0.98
TOTAL	7.70	0.50	5.68	0.55	1.16

Of the five major legal basis types, county and multijurisdictional libraries are at the greatest disadvantage in the Star Libraries ranking. Those legal basis types, on average, generate lower per capita service outputs—the basis of the Star Library ratings—because they are less well funded. In 2015, the data year for the 2017 ratings, county and multijurisdictional libraries averaged \$29.40 and \$23.87 per capita. By contrast, city libraries averaged \$41.56; library districts, \$54.29; and nonprofit associations, \$38.49. It appears to be a simple matter of “you get what you pay for.” Why these legal basis types tend to be funded relatively poorly, and therefore generate lower per capita outputs, is an interesting question for further research.

TABLE 6 ALL *LJ* INDEX-ELIGIBLE LIBRARIES AND STAR LIBRARIES BY SELECTED LEGAL BASIS TYPE, 2017 (2015 DATA)

SELECTED LEGAL BASIS TYPE	ALL <i>LJ</i> INDEX-ELIGIBLE LIBRARIES	STAR LIBRARIES
City	50%	50%
County	12%	7%
Library District	17%	18%
Multijurisdictional	4%	2%
Non-Profit Association	14%	16%
Total	97%	93%

In the meantime, those who work in a county or multijurisdictional library system might find it useful to consider the ranking of the library’s *LJ* Index score relative to other libraries of the same legal basis type in their expenditure category.

TABLE 7 COUNTY AND MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL LIBRARIES IN SELECTED SOUTHERN STATES, 2017 (2015 DATA)

SELECTED SOUTHERN STATE	COUNTY LIBRARIES	MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL LIBRARIES	COUNTY AND MULTI JURISDICTIONAL TOTAL
Arkansas	40%	30%	70%
Georgia	45%	56%	100%
Mississippi	36%	34%	70%
North Carolina	61%	17%	78%
Tennessee	43%	0%	43%

What’s still missing?

As noted in last year’s article, one of the most conspicuously missing output measures is use of *electronic collections*, the term the Public Library Survey now uses for what were once referred to as databases. Despite the long-standing COUNTER standards for database usage statistics, a nationally standardized measure of this prominent service output is

probably still a few years off. Early adopter states could do the rest of the public library community a tremendous service by testing alternative measures of the use of electronic collections.

Perhaps the newest and most unexplored area of public library service output measurement is Maker spaces. These are especially challenging to measure as they enable such a wide variety of creative endeavors, requiring different types of facilities:

- Traditional arts and crafts, drawing boards, calligraphy, kilns, looms, sewing machines, button makers, and laminators;
- Audio/music, video, or multimedia production, studios, still and video cameras, synthesizers, pianos and other instruments, microphones, and recording and editing - equipment;
- Prototyping of inventions, computer assisted design (CAD) software, 3-D printers and scanners, and robotics;
- Visual arts, studios, canvasses, paints and brushes, and gallery space;
- Performing arts, rehearsal spaces, theaters, and sound and lighting equipment; and
- Writing, quiet spaces, computers, paper and writing instruments.

And doubtless, that list leaves something out.

Considering the wide range of Maker activities, it will probably be best to begin with the lowest common denominator: the number of visits to, or uses of, Maker spaces—regardless of the specific type of creative activity conducted. Although this has the disadvantage of failing to capture Maker activities not conducted in dedicated spaces, these would presumably already be counted, though not broken out, within the program attendance measure. In time, once there is more widespread experience with this relatively new service area, it might be workable to subdivide a single measure—say, between high-tech and low-tech types of Maker space activity. Again, the important thing is for early adopter states to begin experimenting with measurement options for this new and rapidly expanding facet of public library service. Development of new measures requires that someone be on the “bleeding edge,” designing and testing alternative measures until the most workable and useful one for most libraries can be found.

Standout stats

There are at least two dramatically different strategies for pursuing a higher *LJ* Index score. One is to excel as much as possible at all five types of service output; another is to focus on one or two specific types of output and excel exceptionally at those.

The *LJ* Index design makes no assumptions about the intended output of a library. It does not assume that a library must excel across the board. It allows a library to excel on one service output—even if at the expense of others—if that is the course that library’s decision-makers chart.

As a result, each of the five per capita statistics used to calculate an *LJ* Index score is given equal weight. Total circulation is not assumed to be any more important than program attendance. Library visits are not assumed to be any more crucial than uses of public Internet computers. Because the *LJ* Index formula uses standard scores, a library gets full credit for reporting an exceptionally high figure on a single statistic.

Sometimes, though, excelling on a single statistic does not suffice to earn a library Star status. In such cases, it may be useful to examine the per capita statistics for your library's expenditure category peers. Perhaps your library reported the highest value for one of the per capita statistics without achieving Star status. Or perhaps your library reported the highest value on a statistic for some subset of libraries in its expenditure category.

Whether your library achieves Star status or not, the *LJ* Index offers a tremendous amount of data that could help to illuminate how your library stands out from the crowd.

» Next page: "All-Time All-Stars"