Project Title:	Integrating Public Library Databases onto a National Digital Base Map for Enhanced Library Services and Research
Investigator(s):	Christine Koontz and Charles R. McClure
Funding Agency:	Institute of Library and Museum Services
Award Dates:	October 2002 – September 2004
Award Amount:	$97,739

This project will link key public library data sets to a recently created nationwide digital public library base map, producing a first-ever integrated nationwide public library database system. The data sets will include relevant U.S. Census data; important geographic boundaries and features; and public library use data. Other possible data sets include public library Internet connectivity, bandwidth, service capabilities; location of E-rate library applicants (linked to application information); and Library Services and Technology Act funding levels by location.

With such a database system, public librarians and policymakers can begin addressing an ever-growing number of decisions and issues at the local, regional, and national levels. Questions include--is the library providing the right balance of library services to changing populations? How should funding levels of local library service adjust to these changes? How can public libraries bridge the digital divide through provision of equitable access to the Internet? What is the relationship between distance (i.e. to a facility, user travel time), and library use? What are the effects of poverty and E-rate on library services?

The objectives of this project are to:

- Integrate currently developed and relevant national data sets;
- Develop and maintain an up-to-date national database of all public library outlets that is geographically accurate with respect to location;
- Review the feasibility of developing a protocol and methodology for incorporating other public library data sets and information into the nationwide database system as identified and prioritized by the research community, policy makers, public librarians, and library managers;
- Longer-term, as data sets continue to be integrated into the database system, be a "one-stop" Internet access point for public library researchers and library managers with an integrated data source for library projects and planning.

The design and development of such a nationwide database linked to a digital base map will benefit a large number of stakeholders in the library community as well as a range of policy makers from the local, state, national, and international level. Having numerous databases with varying levels of information that are not integrated hinders rational decisions about library services and programs. The true value and benefits from this proposed database and map will only begin to be realized upon its development and implementation. Over time as new databases are developed and added, it will become an essential tool in helping researchers, policy makers, and public libraries better meet the needs of the people libraries serve. The vision of this initial, first ever integrated public library database system, is for it to serve as the premiere data repository for library decision makers, just as the public library serves as the premiere data repository for library users.

IMLS-GIS