



Project Title: Public Library Internet Services: Impacts on the Digital Divide
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The development of national public library networked statistics and performance measures are important undertakings that continue to receive inadequate attention and support. Increasingly, there is recognition for the need of such statistics and performance measures that assist public libraries make a strong case for federal or local community support for technology and information infrastructure by documenting their Internet-based services and resources; allow individual libraries, states, and regions to effectively compare themselves to others in terms of Internet development, costs, provision of services, connectivity, and use; enable local library directors and state library agencies to compete for resources with other local and state organizations as by documenting the range, extent, and impact of library-provided networked services; facilitate the transition from traditional library use measures such as circulation, reference transactions, interlibrary loans, etc., to network measures that describe the nature and use of library-based network activities and resources; attempt to measure public library networked services and activities occurring, generally, at individual library systems, without any coordination and aggregation of such measures across public libraries at the regional, state, or national levels; and assist libraries in administrative, management, and planning activities.

The problem that this study addresses is how to design and implement a national data collection, analysis, and reporting system for public library network statistics and performance measures that is both accurate and reports data in a timely fashion. Currently there is no such system in place. Thus, the goal of the study is to develop a process whereby the public library community, state library agencies, policy makers, researchers, and others can have accurate and timely national data that describe networked services, resources, and activities. More specifically, the study objectives are to: (1) develop and test a model for a national approach for collecting and analyzing public library data that describe networked services and resources; (2) develop and implement a process whereby selected statistics and performance measures that describe networked services, activities, and resources that can be established as national standards; and (3) assist public libraries and state library agencies implement and refine the model.

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