

## Preface

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) requests clearance for the collection of the Public Libraries Survey (PLS), FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009 from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This survey was first implemented in 1989 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to collect library statistics for all public libraries in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the outlying areas. This clearance requests permission to collect the same data that OMB approved NCES to collect for FY2005 and FY2006.

### Section A. Justification

#### A.1. Necessity of the Information Collection

The Public Libraries Survey (PLS) will be a cooperative effort of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Census Bureau (the data collection agent for IMLS), and the PLS Steering Committee. In 1985, a pilot project was conducted in 15 states to assess the feasibility of a federal-state cooperative program for the collection of public library data. The pilot project was funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the U.S. Department of Education's former Office of Library Programs (now a division of IMLS). The American Library Association (ALA) provided valuable guidance. In 1987, the project's final report recommended the development of a nationwide data collection system. The Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 (P.L. 100-297, 102 Stat. 130, 335 (1988)) charged NCES with developing a voluntary Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS) for the annual collection of public library data. To carry out this mandate, in 1988, NCES formed a survey steering committee with the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), and representatives from state library agencies and ALA.

The Public Libraries Survey (PLS), a voluntary survey, collects descriptive data on the universe of public libraries in the United States and the outlying areas through a network of state data coordinators located in the state library agencies. The PLS is considered a model of federal-state cooperation. The survey has had a unit response rate of 96 percent or higher every year since its inception. The high response rate is an indication of states' interest in the data and their commitment to the survey.

These data provide current, national data on the status of approximately 9,000 public libraries and their public library service outlets. Public libraries fill important educational, informational, economic, cultural, and recreational needs. Reliable, valid, and timely public library statistics provide a basis for effective program evaluation and management and a tool for policy makers in determining the investment of public resources in public library development.

### Congressional Authorization

IMLS will fulfill the congressional mandate in 20 U.S.C. sec. 9108 (Analysis of impact of museum and library services):

“From amounts described in sections 9123(c) and 9176(b) of this title [it is possible other funding sources will be provided], the Director shall carry out and publish analyses of the impact of museum and library services. Such analyses—

“(1) shall be conducted in ongoing consultation with—

“(A) State library administrative agencies;

“(B) State, regional, and national library and museum organizations; and

“(C) other relevant agencies and organizations;

“(2) shall identify national needs for, and trends of, museum and library services provided with funds made available under subchapters II and III of this chapter;

- “(3) shall report on the impact and effectiveness of programs conducted with funds made available by the Institute in addressing such needs; and
- “(4) shall identify, and disseminate information on, the best practices of such programs to the agencies and entities described in paragraph (1).”

IMLS library survey activities will be designed to address high priority library data needs; provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of the status and trends of state and public libraries; and report timely, useful, and high quality data to the U.S. Congress, the states, other education policymakers, practitioners, data users, and the general public.

## **A.2. Purposes and Uses of the Data**

The purpose of the PLS data collection is to provide state and federal policymakers and other interested parties with information about public libraries in the U.S. The PLS is a national census of public libraries and their service outlets including descriptive data for each state and for each public library. The data allow comparisons among libraries of similar size on variables such as size of collection, total number of staff, and total operating expenditures. The *Compare Public Libraries* interactive tool, anticipated to be accessible through the IMLS web site, would facilitate these peer comparisons.

Federal, state, and local officials use these data as they make policy decisions about legislation, appropriations, and resource allocation. Public library statistics are needed, for example, to support periodic review of legislation such as the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Statistics are also needed to help shape recommendations of IMLS, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and other agencies interested in public libraries. These data are also used at the state and local levels to compare conditions in libraries of similar size.

National, state, regional, and local professional library associations need current, comprehensive public library data for developing informed policy positions on public libraries. In addition, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) supports the development of a universe file for use in sample surveys on such topics as use of technology in libraries, public library participation in networks and cooperatives, handicapped access, and services to children and young adults.

Researchers need these data to analyze state of the art of public librarianship and to improve its practice. Private companies need reliable national statistics for developing business plans and marketing strategies within the library sector of the economy. These data are also useful to the private sector in planning moves or adding new business locations. Library services are important assets for employees and their families and for corporate operations. Journalists and educators use library statistics in describing the role of public libraries in American society.

## **A.3. Use of Information Technology**

The PLS was the first national NCES data collection to be reported, edited, and tabulated completely electronically. In 1989, the NCES developed personal computer software called DECTOP (Data Entry, Conversion, Table Output Program) for states to use in collecting and reporting their public library data to NCES. The software was converted to a Windows-based product in 1998 and renamed WinPLUS (Windows Public Library Universe System). WinPLUS was converted to a web-based reporting system (called WebPLUS) in FY 2005. The team responsible for the conversion the web-based system received Census' Bronze Medal Award "for innovation and effective customer satisfaction." "This Web-based survey reduces respondent burden, improves timeliness and increases data quality." The award is the highest honorary award Census gives.

The survey application allows direct data entry or the import of data from external files (e.g., Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access files). An edit check tool generates on-screen warnings during the data entry/import process, enabling the respondent to review the data and correct errors before submitting the final data to IMLS. An “historical tracking” feature performs universe maintenance based on the respondent’s structural changes to the file, such as closing a library, adding a new library, merging libraries, and changing a library’s name or address.

In addition to a report, data file and documentation, the data are used for two web survey products:

- (1) *Compare Public Libraries* allows users to compare their library with a group of similar libraries, based on a number of library characteristics, such as total circulation or total expenditures.
- (2) *Search for Public Libraries* allows users to review data for any public library in the nation.

#### **A.4. Efforts to Identify Duplication**

The PLS is the only known universe survey of public libraries in the United States. The PLS Steering Committee provides continuing guidance in the design and administration of the survey and includes representatives from state library agencies, ALA, and the Census Bureau. The committee is aware of the need to identify and avoid duplication of effort. A search has been made to identify other efforts that might duplicate this data collection effort. IMLS finds that there is no other universe surveys of public libraries, and no other effort that duplicates the data collection under the PLS.

In 1988, ALA’s Public Library Association (PLA) developed the Public Library Data Service (PLDS), which is conducted annually. The PLDS survey, however, is different from the PLS in a number of important ways.

The PLDS annual survey collects data from approximately 800 public libraries across the country and Canada, not a universe. Approximately 79 percent of the PLDS respondents represent public libraries serving populations of over 100,000, while almost 95 percent of U.S. public libraries serve populations less than 100,000. The PLS is a universe survey of approximately 9,000 public libraries in the U.S. and its outlying areas

The PLDS reports the raw data submitted by local public libraries. The PLS collects public library data through the state library agencies. The state library agencies edit the PLS data before submitting it to the Census Bureau for data processing, edit follow-up, and imputation.

- The data elements from the two surveys are not comparable. While there is some overlap of items, such as type of outlet, revenue, operating expenditures, and number of staff, the PLDS also collects some data elements not collected under the PLS (e.g., number of people registered at the library, library director’s name and salary, beginning librarian’s salary, in-library use of materials, some holdings, filtered Internet access, fax information delivery, e-mail reference service, annual electronic visits, and remote access of the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC)).
- The PLS collects many substantive items not collected under PLDS, including circulation of children’s materials; children’s program attendance; collections for books and serials, audio, video, and serial subscriptions; number of librarians with and without the ALA-MLS; unduplicated population of legal service areas; and capital expenditures.

#### **A.5. Method Used to Minimize Burden on Small Businesses**

Not applicable.

## **A.6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection**

Annual data are more current and thus more valuable for planning and analysis than data collected on a less frequent schedule. Congress, public libraries, state library agencies, researchers, and others use the data to assess the condition of public libraries. Although the PLS data comprise part of the data most state library agencies have historically collected from their local public libraries, up-to-date national and state summaries of standardized data would not be available if IMLS did not conduct this annual survey.

The state library agencies (the data providers), the Census Bureau, and IMLS urge continuation of the PLS on an annual cycle, based on the high demand for these data by the library community. The high value that state library agencies place on the survey is evidenced by the overall response rate by local public libraries of at least 96 percent every year since the survey's inception.

## **A.7. Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances to consider for the FY 2007-09 PLS data collection.

## **A.8. Consultations Outside the Agency**

The PLS Steering Committee is consulted in the design and conduct of the survey. The committee includes representatives of state library agencies (including a chief officer and state data coordinators), ALA, and the Census Bureau.

## **A.9. Payments or Gifts to Respondents**

Respondents to the PLS are not offered nor do they receive pay or gifts for their participation in the PLS.

In the past, eligible state data coordinators have received the Francis Keppel Award (a plaque) for timely and accurate submission of their state data. The award is based on a point system covering important aspects of the original submission and post-submission processing. It is possible that such award would continue to be presented.

## **A.10. Assurance of Confidentiality**

The collection and dissemination of data will be conducted in accordance with applicable law.

## **A.11. Justification for Sensitive Questions**

The PLS collects staff salaries and employee benefits information, and these data are potentially sensitive for the many small public libraries in the nation, although they might be considered public information in their communities. These data are a significant portion of a public library's operating expenses and cannot be omitted from a data collection whose purpose is to provide basic descriptive information on public libraries. However, the collection and dissemination of data will be conducted in accordance with applicable law, with attention paid to potentially sensitive information. (see also section A.10 above).

## **A. 12. Estimates of Hour Burden to Respondents**

The PLS data are usually only part of the data that state library agencies collect on their surveys of local public libraries. The PLS data are extracted from the state surveys by the state data coordinators and reported to the NCES on the web survey application.

<u>Survey</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>Estimated response time*</u>	<u>Total</u>
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burden hours

PLS 50 states, DC, and 4 outlying areas 39.8 hours 2,189 hours

\*Time per response is based on FY 2006 survey results that ranged from 2.5 hours to 300 hours (averaging 39.8 hours).

The cost of this data collection is estimated to be \$56,914 in respondent costs. This estimate of respondent costs is derived by multiplying the average reporting hours per respondent, by the average hourly compensation for a typical respondent (\$26.00 per hour for the combined time of a state data coordinator and a technician), by the number of projected respondents.

**A.13. Estimate of Cost Burden to Respondents**

There are no costs beyond those mentioned under A. 12.

**A.14. Estimates of Costs to Federal Government**

The total cost to the federal government for administering the FY 2008 PLS is estimated to be \$1,490,000. This includes salaries and meeting expenses for IMLS and \$1,055,000 for the Census Bureau, the data collection agent for the PLS through a prospective interagency agreement.

**A.15. Reason for Program Changes or Cost Adjustments**

There are no additional costs to the respondents beyond those mentioned in section A. 12.

**A.16. Project Schedule**

The PLS data products are released to the public on the IMLS website as soon as they are available. The PLS data products include (1) the final data file (in MS-Access and ASCII format) and (2) a report in Portable Document Format (PDF) that contains an introduction, findings, and numerous tables of national and state totals. A print copy of the report will be disseminated to COSLA, state data coordinators, and the PLS Steering Committee.

The PLS will follow this proposed schedule for the collection of FY 2007 data:

- |    |                       |  |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| 1. | Survey mail-out       | December 11, 2007  |
| 2. | Survey due date*      | April 17, 2008 (Group 1)<br>July 31, 2008 (Group 2)<br>August 30, 2008 (Group 3) |
| 3. | Edit follow-up begins | Upon survey receipt (on flow basis)  |
| 4. | Report released       | July 2009  |
| 5. | Final file released   | July 2009  |

\*The staggered survey due dates were established in order to accommodate the various state fiscal cycles and improve the flow of data processing at Census.

**A.17. Request to Not Display Expiration Date**

This collection will display the expiration date upon OMB approval.

**A.18. Exceptions to the Certification**

There are no exceptions to the certification.