State Library Chiefs' Public Libraries Survey (PLS) Utilization

Welcome!

Background
Over the past two years, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has been reviewing data elements included in the Public Libraries Survey (PLS). During this time, we have:

· Worked with the PLS contractor, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to understand technical flags when the PLS data are collected;

· Surveyed and held in-depth discussions with the State Data Coordinators (SDC) to understand their challenges in collecting data; and

· Attempted to learn how library stakeholders use PLS data via the SDCs and the members of our Library Statistics Working Group (LSWG).

We now seek your assistance in understanding the utilization of a small subset of the metrics based on data elements SDCs cited as particularly challenging from a data collection and reporting standpoint. These metrics are associated with reference transactions, electronic collections usage, and WiFi sessions. This information will be important to enhance the utility of the PLS for the U.S. public library community.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. The survey is not confidential, however, when we share findings, information reported in the survey will not be associated with specific respondents (i.e., identifying information will be redacted). There are no special incentives for your individual participation. The information you provide will be important as we continue to improve the PLS to meet the needs of the U.S. public library community. We hope that you will be able to spend 10-15 minutes providing answers to this questionnaire. Please feel free to consult with any others at your state library agency, as appropriate, to answer these questions.

Instructions
Please submit your survey via SurveyMonkey by Wednesday, 21 November 2018 (the day before Thanksgiving).

We understand that all state librarians' responsibilities differ, with some overseeing library facilities in addition to heading an agency. Therefore, when answering questions, please keep in mind that we are generally asking about data reported by public libraries across your state and not just data about your specific library facility. Also, different people in your state library agency may use data differently, so consult any others as needed to answer the questions.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Lisa Frehill, IMLS Senior Statistician at 202-653-4649 or via email at lfrehill@imls.gov. She will be gathering and analyzing the responses.

Part 1. Reference Transactions

Reference transactions have been a traditional indicator for libraries. Over the years, the nature of reference transactions has changed. We are interested in your thoughts about the continued importance of this indicator in the Public Libraries Survey (PLS).

1. How important is it for your state library agency to have information about reference transactions from public libraries in your state/territory?

○ Very important

○ Somewhat important

○ Not at all important

2. Overall, what is your level of confidence in the quality of public library reference transaction data that you have seen?

○ Very confident

○ Somewhat confident

○ Not at all confident

○ Not applicable

3. Does your state library agency currently use reference transactions data?

○ Yes

○ No

Why or why not?

4. Knowing state library agencies use reference transaction data in multiple ways, please share how your state library agency uses these data. If you have reports or other materials that relate to this, please feel free to share the link(s).

5. Regardless of whether you currently use or do not use data about reference transactions, assuming high quality data about this were available for the public libraries in your state, would it be useful to have data on reference transactions?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Why or why not?

Part 2. Electronic Collections Usage

As many libraries invest significant resources in electronic materials, the PLS now has three data elements associated with usage of electronic collections. One is "Use of electronic materials" (circulating items like e-books), a second is "successful retrieval of electronic information" (databases) and a third is the sum of these two, "Electronic content use." The SDCs reported challenges in collecting these data from individual public libraries because information is not always available at the local library level in a way that is consistent with PLS reporting needs. We are interested in your opinions about data you use related to electronic collections usage.

6. How important is it for your state library agency to have information on electronic collections use?

◯ Very important
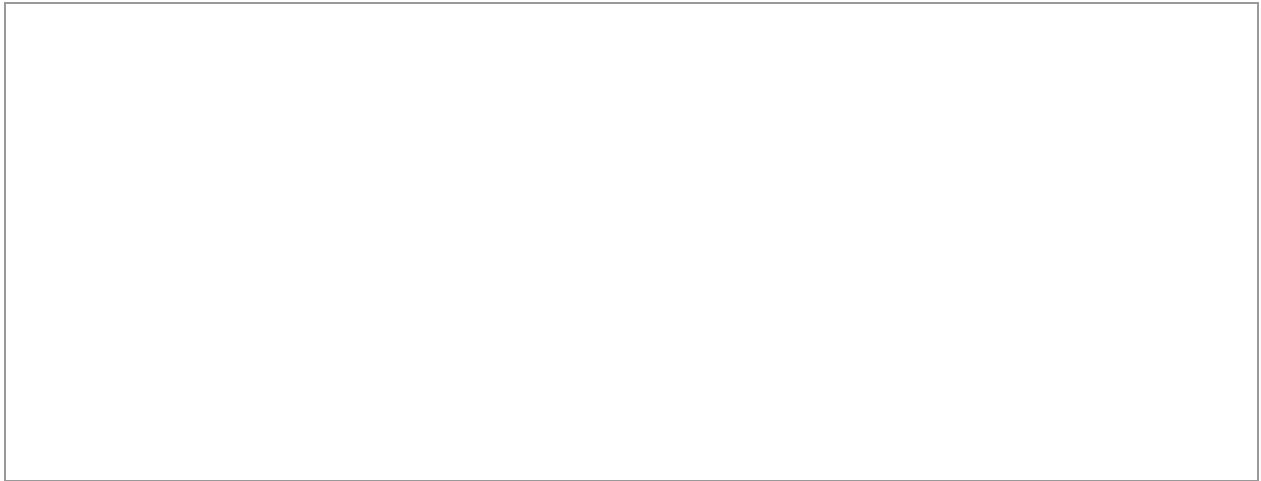
◯ Somewhat important

◯ Not so important

7. From what source(s) does your state library agency obtain information about usage of electronic collections?

☐ Public Libraries Survey (PLS)

☐ Vendor-provided (please specify below)

☐ Other (please specify below)

☐ Please specify vendor or "other"

8. How would you characterize your confidence in the data provided by each source referenced in the previous question?

	Highly confident	Somewhat confident	Not at all confident
PLS	◯	◯	◯
Vendor-provided	◯	◯	◯
Other	◯	◯	◯

9. Knowing state library agencies use data about electronic collections usage in multiple ways, please share how your state library agency uses these data. If you have reports or other materials that relate to this, please feel free to share the link(s).

Part 3. WiFi Sessions

Starting with the FY 2014 PLS, public libraries have reported about the number of WiFi sessions provided by their library's wireless service. Many libraries have said they have challenges in providing this information, despite the presence of technical means of obtaining this information. Data about WiFi sessions has been highlighted as important for articulating the continuing value of America's public libraries.

10. How important is it for your state library agency to have information about WiFi sessions from public libraries in your state/territory?

◯ Very important

◯ Somewhat important

◯ Not at all important

11. When did your state library agency start collecting data about WiFi sessions provided by libraries' wireless services?

◯ Before 2014

◯ 2014

◯ 2015

◯ 2016

◯ 2017

◯ 2018

◯ We do not collect this information

12. Knowing state library agencies use data about WiFi sessions provided by wireless services in multiple ways, please share how your state library agency uses these data. If you have reports or other materials that relate to this, please feel free to share the link(s).
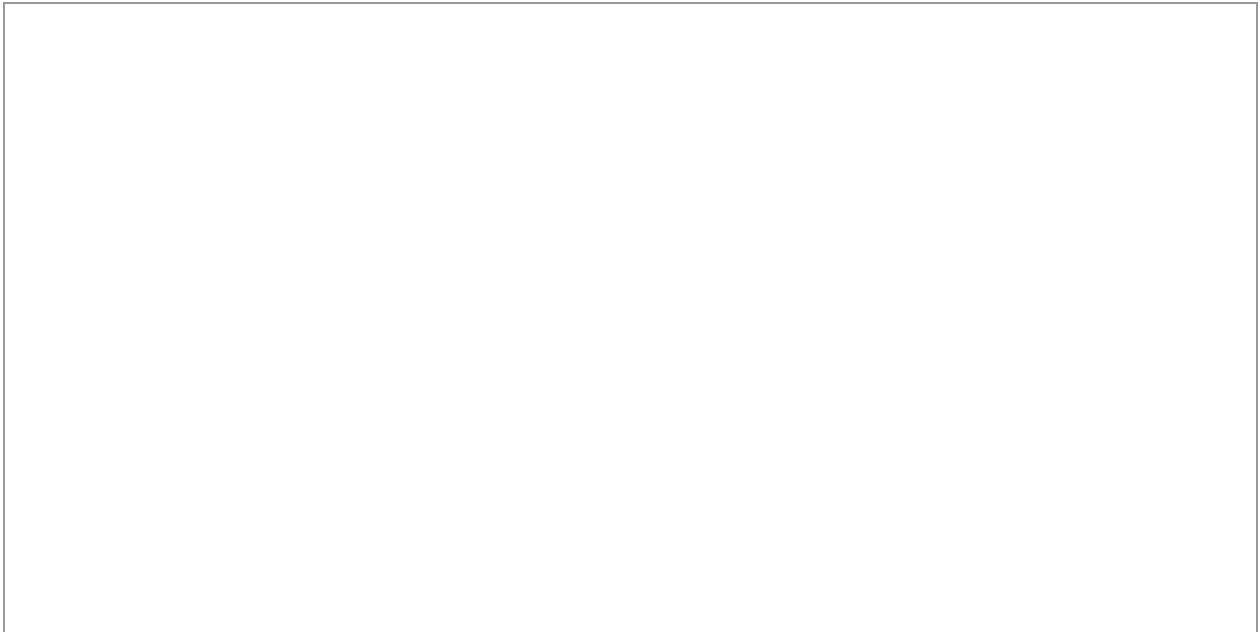
13. Regardless of whether you currently use or do not use data about WiFi sessions, assuming high quality data about this were available for the public libraries in your state, would it be useful to have data on WiFi sessions?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Why or why not?

14. Thank you for completing the survey. Please use this space to provide additional information about reference transactions, electronic collections usage or WiFi sessions. Additionally, please feel free to send comments to lfrehill@imls.gov.