

Justification for Change

3137-0074 Public Libraries Survey

IMLS is requesting a change to a previously approved clearance in order to add a new data element. This change is requesting the same expiration date of 1/31/2020.

Request abstract:

The Public Libraries Survey has been conducted by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the clearance number 3137-0074, which expires 1/31/2020. Pursuant to P.L. 107-279, this Public Libraries Survey collects annual descriptive data on the universe of public libraries in the United States and the Outlying Areas. Information such as public service hours per year, circulation of library books, number of librarians, population of legal service area, expenditures for library collection, programs for children and young adults, staff salary data, and access to technology, etc., is collected.

Justification for adding data elements:

Add New Item 653—Website Visits.

This new item will ask States to report on the number of website visits annually, collected at the Administrative Entity (AE) library level.

Rationale: Traditional output measures such as visits, circulation, and program attendance are increasingly inadequate to capture the wide variety of ways that people use the library. A growing number of people use library services via library websites without ever setting foot in the building, and a subset of those who visit the building use the library website during their visit. If we don't track website visits, then the story we can tell about library usage is at best incomplete. In addition, tracking virtual use measures such as website visits gives us the ability to provide a counter-narrative to the claim that library use (i.e., physical visits) is decreasing.

We will have more information after next year's FY 2018 PLS submission (Jan – Aug 2019) on whether the burden will increase after collecting the information this year. We are expecting a majority of the states will be able to submit this information for the FY 2018 PLS survey. All states are expected to submit for the FY 2019 PLS Survey (Jan – Aug 2020).