



Making Your Case with Public Library Statistics

Statistics of Alaska Public Libraries

Print copies sent to all public libraries from FY1988 through FY2005

See: <http://library.state.ak.us/dev/plstats/plstats.html> for FY1996 to date

Use Comparisons to Lobby for Increases

Scenario: You think that your library receives less funding than comparable libraries. You use statistics to create a list of comparable libraries (frequently based on population of area served) and compare your library's total income with your peer libraries. You notice that your library circulates more items per capita than your peers, but has the lowest total income in this group. You use this data to prove that your library is effective despite low funding levels. You urge the powers-that-be to increase your funding so you can provide even better service to your patrons.

Use Stats to Create an Annual Report/Brochure

Scenario: You are asked to provide a budget presentation on your library. You use statistics that highlight your services to develop a brochure that lists the major projects of the library for the past year, its volunteer program, and statistical comparisons between your library and peer libraries in your region or state. This brochure is so effective with the powers-that-be that you decide to make it available as a handout at your circulation desk.

Use Stats to Highlight Your Library

Scenario: You are asked to do a presentation on your library at the chamber of commerce. You gather statistics to show how heavily the library is used. You focus on the business materials in your library and present circulation statistics showing how often these materials are checked out. You present anecdotal evidence about a case in which a recently-established business used your library to develop a business plan and do research on the economics and demographics of your community.

Use Stats to Justify Your Programs and Services

Scenario: You convince the powers-that-be to fund a new service at your library. You keep statistics to prove that this new service is reaching the intended audience and that this audience has used other related library services. You present numbers from the previous year (before the service was initiated) and the current year (after the service was initiated.) You continue to receive more money.

Use Stats to Measure Effectiveness

Scenario: You decide to weed your collection, despite misgivings from the powers-that-be. You use output measures (per capita measures, shown as a factor of population) to show that the circulation of items per capita increased after the weeding project.

Use Stats to Write Grant Applications

Scenario: You notice that certain materials are being used heavily and are falling apart. You discover that an under-served segment of your population is using these few materials. You gather demographic statistics about this under-served population and library usage statistics to show the need that exists. You write a grant application and use both sets of numbers to prove that your library needs additional funding to meet the needs of these patrons.