



What Can Be Done About North Carolina's Public Libraries?

Governance and funding of North Carolina public libraries has left the state near the bottom in rankings across many measures, as detailed in the latest report *Public Libraries Survey Fiscal Year 2007*, released in June 2009 and published by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

(See <http://harvester.census.gov/imls/pubs/Publications/pls2007.pdf>.)

The *Public Library State Ranking Tables* on pages 145-155 include the following items about North Carolina and national rankings:

- Number of public Internet computers - rank 32nd, with 3.43 per 5,000 population.
- Total paid FTE ALA-MLS librarians - rank 34th at 2.0 librarians per 25,000 population.
- Number of library visits - rank 38th, with 4.10 per capita.
- Circulation per capita - rank 38th at 5.58 and this is a direct result of not being able to purchase enough materials that people want and need.
- Collection expenditures per capita - rank 45th at \$2.77.
- Overall funding per capita - rank 42nd at \$21.64.
- Total paid FTE staff - rank 46th at 8.89 per 25,000 population.
- The State of NC provided less than \$15.8 million this year, a little less than in 1999. We need State funding more than ever. NC needs to be an example to local officials in maintaining funding.

National overall funding per capita is \$34.95. Our system of funding is inadequate to bring library services even close to a median or average level. For North Carolina to come up to the national average, the state and localities need to provide an additional \$13.34 per capita, or \$122,750,330 per year to support the library service needs of 9,222,414 Tar Heels.

Does the State of North Carolina care about education, quality of life, and being one of the best places to live, work, and raise a family? You wouldn't know it, given the sad state of its public libraries. As the 10th most populous state in the country, as a state attracting droves of people and companies to drive its economic engine, and as a state which prides itself on being a progressive model for the nation, North Carolina should be a national leader in providing public library service to its citizens.

Last year, with the support of the many friends of the library groups, trustees and legislators we successfully preserved state funding to public libraries against budget cuts. This year our task is even more daunting. Working together to protect local and state funding to public libraries must be our top priority now. Looking towards our future, let's start a fresh conversation of how our state can best provide leadership in a positive manner to provide incentive to localities to improve local funding as well for public libraries. The answers will not come quickly or easily, but we must work together to find answers for North Carolina.

HATS OFF TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES!

May 19 – Legislative Day in Raleigh

**Rally at 9:00 am to launch the day – State Library auditorium, main entrance,
located next door to the legislature.**

Library booths, hand-outs, refreshments - Legislative Building, 1100 Court.

- **Visit your legislators. Tell them the importance of public libraries in your communities, especially during tough economic times. Our message: Preserve State Aid!**
- **Wear a hat of your choosing – plain, fancy, whimsical or humorous, or just come as you are, but by all means COME AND VISIT, WRITE, or EMAIL your legislators.**