

Great American Public Libraries: The 2004 HAPLR Rankings

Two new measures supplement this year's assessment of the nation's public libraries **by Thomas J. Hennen Jr.**

Has the economic downturn affected library performance? Will Hennen's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR) finally include building size and electronic resources? Did many of the same libraries top the rating scales again? In this sixth edition, I will try to address these and other issues. Many librarians look forward to the ratings; others dread or deride them. Last year's summary appeared in the October 2003 *American Libraries* (p. 44–48), while the rating numbers are treated more fully on my website at www.haplr-index.com.

The U.S. economic downturn is mostly affecting the input side of the ledger for now, and that is to be expected. There is a lag between budget cuts and the decline in library usage that we are just beginning to see. Denver Public Library has been at the top of the list for several years running, but this year—partly due to budget cuts—it slipped to third place. We can expect more of that if library revenues continue to decline.

Separate measures

I have still not incorporated the available electronic-resources data into the ratings themselves (see p. 58–59), but I have indicated a separate ranking for the top five libraries in each population category in this article and will include more detail on my website. The data are still too skewed to incorporate into the HAPLR general ratings.

The Federal-State Cooperative Service (FSCS), which gathers the data on which HAPLR is based, has finally started including building statistics. That will be great news for architectural planners. I have not incorporated this area into the HAPLR ratings, but if I ever do, it will undoubtedly be in the form of a litmus test; a library either passes with a threshold square footage or

it does not. More likely, the building data will continue to be reported separately.

State comparisons

Table 1 indicates the relative 2003 and 2004 rankings for each state. The scores weight the population of library communities, so that a high score for a populous community in a state weighs more heavily than one for a less populous community. There is usually little movement from one rating year to the next, but a few states always move in the ratings. Arkansas, Colorado, North Carolina, and South Carolina advanced by more than two positions. Minnesota, Montana, and Oklahoma fell by more than three positions.

Building-size comparisons

Building size is a key measure of public library service, but incorporating the data directly into the HAPLR

Structure of the HAPLR Scores

This sixth edition of the HAPLR library ratings is based on data filed by libraries in 2003 concerning 2002 activities. The first edition in 1999 was based on data filed in 1997. The Federal-State Cooperative System compiles the annual reports as reported by state library agencies for nearly 9,000 libraries into a single dataset.

The HAPLR scores are based on six input and nine output measures. Each factor is weighted and then scored. Only libraries serving comparably sized populations are compared with one another. The author adds the scores for each library within a population category to develop a weighted score in each population category. A 95th-percentile score for all 15 measures would put the library at the top of its population category with a score of 950. A fifth-percentile score for all measures would place the library at the bottom with a score of 50. Most scores are between 250 and 750. Further detail on the rating methods is available at www.haplr-index.com. Scores for the top 10 libraries in each population category are included in the table on pages 58–59.



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rankings may not be possible in the near term, even though FSCS has started collecting it. More than one out of six libraries still have not reported their building size for FSCS purposes. Four states (Alabama, Idaho, Illinois, and Nevada) have not reported building size for any libraries. Only 27 states reported building size for 90% or more of their libraries.

The data here can be refined further, of course, and building planners have been asking for this for a long time. In *Hennen's Public Library Planner*, I used comparisons for Wisconsin in the section on building planning because the federal data were not yet available. Questions on comparative building sizes are asked repeatedly during any library building program.

Still, the data available will prove extremely useful for planners. Consider the data in Table 2, which shows three measures: square feet per capita, books per square foot, and square feet per Full Time Equivalent staff. A library with a measure in the first quartile is in the bottom 25% of its peers, while one in the third quartile is in the top 25%. As population size declines, all three measures increase; the trend is less marked for books per square foot. The smaller the library, the higher the space provided. Economies of scale are at work in larger operations.

Spending per use on electronic resources costs more than spending per use on print materials.

The table shows only three population categories, rather than the usual 10, for purposes of building comparisons. Further details, including regional variations, are presented on my website at www.haplr-index.com.

Electronic-resource use

The FSCS has also begun reporting electronic-resource use and spending, now that enough libraries are delivering the data to their state agencies. I have still not mixed the data into the HAPLR rankings, however, for a number of reasons. This is because there is an extremely large gap between the highest and lowest reported rates.

As libraries get in the habit of noting these statistics, comparing them with how they are reported elsewhere, and paying attention to the definitions used in their state, these numbers will improve in consistency and reliability. Until then I am not comfortable including such volatile data in the ratings.


It should be noted that electronic-resource use exceeds or is very close to exceeding reference use in all sizes of libraries, as Table 3 demonstrates. In recent years, reported reference use has been declining as electronic-resource use has soared. Table 4 indicates that spending per use on electronic resources costs more than spending per use on print materials. 

Table 1. State HAPLR Scores

	2003		2004	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Alabama	340	49	343	49
Alaska	463	28	450	33
Arizona	538	17	545	18
Arkansas	377	46	383	45
California	402	43	411	41
Colorado	652	5	627	9
Connecticut	507	23	518	21
Delaware	467	26	504	24
D.C.	330	50	338	50
Florida	457	29	459	30
Georgia	379	45	379	46
Hawaii	428	38	440	38
Idaho	564	15	558	16
Illinois	518	22	518	22
Indiana	667	4	673	4
Iowa	596	11	596	11
Kansas	634	8	632	6
Kentucky	448	34	447	34
Louisiana	374	48	366	47
Maine	486	24	499	26
Maryland	632	9	630	8
Massachusetts	544	16	548	17
Michigan	456	30	469	28
Minnesota	524	20	582	12
Mississippi	317	51	311	51
Missouri	572	13	562	15
Montana	454	32	463	29
Nebraska	603	10	619	10
Nevada	472	25	500	25
New Hampshire	467	27	473	27
New Jersey	455	31	459	32
New Mexico	406	41	406	42
New York	533	19	532	19
North Carolina	452	33	442	36
North Dakota	537	18	532	20
Ohio	713	1	723	1
Oklahoma	436	36	459	31
Oregon	674	3	680	3
Pennsylvania	424	40	431	39
Rhode Island	428	39	440	37
South Carolina	433	37	429	40
South Dakota	568	14	575	13
Tennessee	376	47	362	48
Texas	379	44	389	43
Utah	683	2	690	2
Vermont	445	35	446	35
Virginia	578	12	575	14
Washington	645	6	650	5
West Virginia	404	42	384	44
Wisconsin	635	7	632	7
Wyoming	521	21	516	23

Table 2. Building-Size Comparison by Quartile

	Over 100,000 Population	10,000–99,999 Population	Under 10,000 Population
Number of Libraries	208	2,762	4,264
Square Feet Per Capita			
1st Quartile	0.3	0.4	0.7
2nd Quartile	0.4	0.6	1.1
3rd Quartile	0.6	0.9	2.0
Books Per Square Foot			
1st Quartile	4.0	3.6	3.7
2nd Quartile	4.9	4.7	5.4
3rd Quartile	6.2	6.4	7.9
Square Feet Per FTE Staff Member			
1st Quartile	771	953	1,253
2nd Quartile	1,064	1,314	1,939
3rd Quartile	1,371	1,782	2,978

Table 3. Reference Use and Electronic-Resource Use

Population Category	Reference Use Per Capita	Electronic- Resource Use Per Capita
Over 500,000	1.5	1.2
250,000–499,999	1.1	0.9
100,000–249,999	0.9	1.0
50,000–99,999	0.8	1.1
25,000–49,999	0.8	1.1
10,000–24,999	0.8	1.1
5,000–9,999	0.8	1.1
2,500–4,999	0.8	1.1
1,000–2,499	0.9	1.2
Under 1,000	1.0	2.0
Average	0.8	1.2

Table 4. Print Material and Electronic Resource Material Spending Rates

Population Category	Spending Per Electronic Use	Spending Per Print Use
Over 500,000	\$1.68	\$0.81
250,000–499,999	\$1.62	\$0.65
100,000–249,999	\$1.56	\$0.68
50,000–99,999	\$1.91	\$0.68
25,000–49,999	\$1.99	\$0.67
10,000–24,999	\$1.78	\$0.64
5,000–9,999	\$1.82	\$0.73
2,500–4,999	\$1.40	\$0.73
1,000–2,499	\$1.30	\$0.77
Under 1,000	\$1.68	\$1.13
Average	\$1.66	\$0.75

Table 5 lists the top five libraries in electronic-resource use for each population category.

The need for planning

For many years in the library community there was something of a civil war over planning and library assessment. On one side were those who wanted to “give the public what it wants” and pump up circulation numbers. On the other side stood those who wanted to maintain input standards and then let the librarians choose materials tastefully, regardless of the circulation numbers. The war ended in an armistice rather than a victory for either side. ALA opted for a “planning process” that let library planners choose the type of library services they wanted for the community regardless of

input standards (or indeed, it seemed, output measures).

Individual states were left with the task of setting standards when ALA abandoned it. ALA pursued planning processes and output measures, while the states dealt with inputs. In my HAPLR rankings, I have tried to reunite the input and output threads. I believe that both are important *and* that a library must tailor its services to the community it serves.

We need thoughtful planning at the local level in reasonably sized units (wider may be wiser). We must measure outputs and compare them to one another. We must also specify minimum standards for libraries; otherwise a collection of castoff books and *National Geographic* magazines can be called a library and demean the very name for excellent libraries everywhere.

Table 5. Electronic-Resource Use

	Library	State	Use Data	Per Capita
Over 500,000	Columbus Metropolitan Library	OH	6,500,000	8.6
	Salt Lake County Library System	UT	3,524,716	5.2
	Nashville Public Library	TN	2,828,800	5.0
	Cleveland Public Library	OH	2,126,280	3.8
	Jefferson County Public Library	CO	1,524,536	2.9
250,000– 499,999	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	PA	1,768,000	3.9
	Genesee District Library	MI	1,187,108	3.7
	Richland County Public Library	SC	1,055,600	3.3
	East Central Georgia Regional Library	GA	1,004,536	3.1
	Spartanburg County Public Libraries	SC	771,472	3.0
100,000 – 249,999	Salem Public Library	OR	1,784,068	12.8
	Chula Vista Public Library	CA	1,470,196	7.7
	Ann Arbor District Library	MI	1,040,000	6.7
	Kansas City, Kansas Public Library	KS	988,000	6.6
	Tacoma Public Library	WA	1,213,108	6.2
50,000 – 99,999	Worthington Public Library	OH	961,688	16.5
	Fountaindale Public Library District	IL	638,560	9.8
	Westerville Public Library	OH	790,452	9.5
	Boulder Public Library	CO	818,168	8.6
	Chillicothe and Ross County Public Library	OH	576,836	7.9
25,000 – 49,999	Franklin Public Library	OH	676,832	25.1
	Curtis Memorial Library	ME	482,248	18.5
	Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County	OH	819,988	17.4
	Upper Arlington Public Library	OH	468,000	13.9
	Beaver Dam Community Library	WI	390,000	13.0
10,000 – 24,999	Caldwell Public Library	OH	219,076	15.6
	Rolling Meadows Library	IL	366,132	14.9
	Staunton Public Library	VA	352,664	14.8
	New Canaan Library	CT	282,464	14.2
	Wickliffe Public Library	OH	275,444	12.8
5,000 – 9,999	Grandview Heights Public Library	OH	220,064	30.1
	Morris Public Library	MN	137,800	26.0
	Port Jefferson Free Library	NY	175,500	23.4
	Orland Hills Public Library District	IL	138,320	20.4
	San Miguel Library District #1/Telluride	CO	91,260	16.6
2,500 – 4,999	Brown Memorial Library	OH	78,000	29.1
	West Nyack Free Library	NY	42,224	12.9
	Fairfax Community Library	VT	36,400	9.7
	Avon Public Library	MA	41,600	9.4
	Roanoke Public Library	TX	24,752	8.8
1,000 – 2,499	Island Free Library	RI	35,880	35.5
	Arlington Public Library	NE	27,040	23.8
	Springlake–Earth Community Library	TX	32,708	19.5
	West Lebanon–Pike Township Public Library	IN	16,380	13.8
	Lincoln Public Library	NH	15,600	12.1
Under 1,000	Cranberry Isles–Great Cranberry Library	ME	2,236	34.9
	Monhegan Memorial Library	ME	2,860	32.5
	Calumet Public Library	MN	11,700	30.5
	St. Edward Public Library	NE	21,632	27.2
	Lake Minchumina Community Library	AK	624	25.0

HENNEN'S AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARY RATINGS, 2004

	LIBRARY	STATE	HAPLR SCORE
Over 500,000 (77 Libraries in Category)	1. Cuyahoga County Public Library	OH	864
	2. Multnomah County Library	OR	861
	3. Denver Public Library	CO	856
	4. Columbus Metropolitan Library	OH	851
	5. Baltimore County Public Library	MD	806
	6. Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library	IN	805
	7. Salt Lake County Library System	UT	802
	8. Hennepin County Library	MN	797
	9. Montgomery County Public Libraries	MD	768
	10. Fairfax County Public Library	VA	737
250,000 – 499,999 (94 Libraries in Category)	1. Santa Clara County Library	CA	886
	2. Johnson County Library	KS	852
	3. Madison Public Library	WI	805
	4. St. Charles City-County Library District	MO	778
	5. Allen County Public Library	IN	776
	6. Chesterfield County Public Library	VA	754
	7. Lincoln City Libraries	NE	749
	8. Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library	OH	744
	9. Richland County Public Library	SC	742
	10. Dakota County Library	MN	727
100,000 – 249,999 (329 Libraries in Category)	1. Naperville Public Libraries	IL	926
	2. Medina County District Library	OH	905
	3. Howard County Library	MD	898
	4. St. Joseph County Public Library	IN	868
	5. Ramsey County Library	MN	855
	6. Salt Lake City Public Library	UT	854
	7. Douglas County Libraries	CO	851
	8. Greene County Public Library	OH	850
	9. Schaumburg Township District Library	IL	840
	10. Middletown Public Library	OH	837
50,000 – 99,999 (530 Libraries in Category)	1. Washington-Centerville Public Library	OH	941
	2. Lakewood Public Library	OH	939
	3. Newton Free Library	MA	898
	4. Euclid Public Library	OH	896
	5. Westerville Public Library	OH	885
	6. Palatine Public Library District	IL	884
	7. Carmel Clay Public Library	IN	879
	8. Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library	OH	877
	9. Worthington Public Library	OH	861
	10. Anderson Public Library	IN	857
25,000 – 49,999 (920 Libraries in Category)	1. Upper Arlington Public Library	OH	898
	2. Westlake Porter Public Library	OH	893
	3. Suffern Free Library	NY	884
	4. James Prendergast Library	NY	883
	5. Lake Oswego Public Library	OR	881
	6. Elmhurst Public Library	IL	878
	7. Warsaw Community Public Library	IN	873
	8. Shaker Heights Public Library	OH	871
	9. Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library	OH	869
	10. Woodridge Public Library	IL	865

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	LIBRARY	STATE	HAPLR SCORE
10,000–24,999 (1,756 Libraries in Category)	1. Twinsburg Public Library	OH	932
	2. Bexley Public Library	OH	923
	3. Brown Deer Public Library	WI	916
	4. North Canton Public Library	OH	910
	5. Wickliffe Public Library	OH	904
	6. Orrville Public Library	OH	892
	7. Henry Carter Hull Library	CT	890
	8. Darien Library	CT	889
	9. Rocky River Public Library	OH	887
	10. Madison Public Library	OH	884
5,000–9,999 (1,445 Libraries in Category)	1. Wright Memorial Public Library	OH	945
	2. Bridgeport Public Library	WV	918
	3. Morris Public Library	MN	909
	4. Freeport Community Library	ME	898
	5. New Cumberland Public Library	PA	889
	6. North Liberty Community Library	IA	874
	7. Williamson Free Public Library	NY	872
	8. Grandview Heights Public Library	OH	870
	9. North Manchester Public Library	IN	869
	10. Bernardsville Public Library	NJ	868
2,500–4,999 (1,308 Libraries in Category)	1. Bell Memorial Public Library	IN	940
	2. Hagerstown–Jefferson Township Public Library	IN	918
	3. Desert Foothills Library	AZ	913
	4. Mount Pleasant Public Library	UT	910
	5. Falconer Public Library	NY	897
	6. James Kennedy Public Library	IA	894
	7. Alden Ewell Free Library	NY	889
	8. Tracy Memorial Library	NH	888
	9. Ardsley Public Library	NY	886
	10. Morton County Library	KS	881
1,000–2,499 (1,598 Libraries in Category)	1. Flomaton Public Library	AL	902
	2. Seneca Free Library	KS	891
	3. Conrad Public Library	IA	890
	4. Sodus Free Library	NY	888
	5. Riceville Public Library	IA	884
	6. Runals Memorial Library	MN	874
	7. Angola Public Library	NY	872
	8. Upton County Public Library	TX	868
	9. Moose Lake Public Library	MN	868
	10. Chewelah Public Library	WA	867
Under 1,000 (970 Libraries in Category)	1. Clayville Library Association	NY	905
	2. Poland Public Library	NY	904
	3. New Woodstock Free Library	NY	894
	4. Hardtner Public Library	KS	887
	5. Brunswick Public Library	NE	868
	6. Silverton Public Library	CO	867
	7. Earlville Free Library	NY	859
	8. Easton Library	NY	848
	9. Chilmark Free Public Library	MA	840
	10. Newfield Public Library	NY	840