The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States

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Highlights

- Small and rural libraries make up the majority of public library systems in the United States (80.5%).

- Although most rural libraries are small, only half of small libraries are located in rural areas.

- States have varying levels of challenges when meeting the needs of rural residents. The percentage of rural public libraries in a given state varies widely – from 3.6% to 83.3%.

- Small and rural libraries continue to provide substantial electronic and digital resources for patrons through access to e-books and publicly accessible computer terminals.

- Although per capita revenue has decreased over the past three years, visitation and circulation have increased for both small and rural libraries.

Rural and small public libraries provide a variety of critical services and information resources to meet the needs of residents across the United States. Recognizing the unique needs of rural communities, state governments and federal agencies[1] support targeted programs to promote social and economic development. For example, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) provides oversight for the Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries, also called e-rate, which uses rurality as a qualifying factor. Many of these state and federal programs support intermediary organizations, such as public libraries, to deliver needed services.

Congress has long recognized the importance of library services in rural communities. The Library Services Act of 1956, a precursor to the current Library Services and Technology Act, was enacted in part to improve the role that public library services play in rural areas. Nongovernmental agencies have also recognized the important role that rural libraries play in their communities. As an example, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's *Rural Library Sustainability Project* has played a significant role in securing public libraries' place as community computing centers.

Though the distribution of small and rural libraries across the U.S. can be determined from available data, IMLS has never conducted a targeted analysis of trends for rural and small library services. This brief is designed to fill that void. In the review that follows we examine the overlap between three categories of "rural" libraries and three categories of "small" libraries. We look at the basic characteristics of these institutions to examine differences in visitation, revenue and staffing.[2] The report provides an overview of the current state of small and rural library services for policymakers, program managers, and researchers concerned with rural development.

What is a "Rural" library?

The term *rural* seems simple and straightforward but can be difficult to define. Rurality is often determined by delineations in geographic boundary or population threshold (Cromartie & Bucholtz, 2008). The federal government has at

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1   This includes but is not limited to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

2   Data for this analysis was drawn from the Public Libraries Survey (PLS) from fiscal years 2008 through 2011. For more information on the PLS, see the data documentation and datasets at www.imls.gov/research.

least fifteen different definitions of "rural" (Fahrenthold, 2013), each designed to address a different policy priority. This analysis makes use of the urban-centric locale code system of the Public Libraries Survey (PLS), which separates rural areas into three categories:

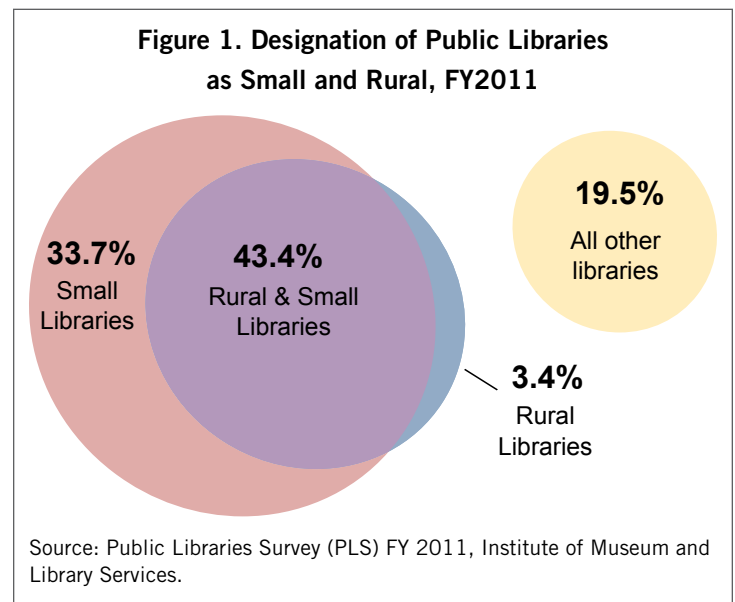| Rural, Fringe	a Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster
Rural, Distant	a Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster
Rural, Remote	a Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster

What is a "Small" library?

Unlike the classification of rural libraries, there are few guideposts for determining what constitutes a "small" library. There has been little discussion in the library and information science (LIS) research literature on the subject. In the few occasions in which the term *small library* has been defined, it has been based on a variety of factors, such as geography and population (Heurtz, Gordon, Gordon, & Moore 2003; Olszewski, Van Orden, & Dalrymple, 2007); a library service area or population of area served (Heurtz, Gordon, Gordon, & Moore 2003); or the characteristics of the libraries in question, such as the size of a library's staff, collection, building, or budget (Strouse, Henry, Brown, & Outsell, Inc. 2008; Calhoun, 2008).

In this analysis, we have defined *small library* based on the population size of a library's legal service area. Libraries with a legal service area population of 25,000 or less were categorized as *small* libraries. After identifying all libraries below this basic threshold, these small libraries were further subdivided into the following three categories:

Small (10 to 25K)	A library with a legal service area population between 10,000 and 24,999
Small (2.5 to 10K)	A library with a legal service area population between 2,500 and 9.999
Small (Less than 2.5K)	A library with a legal service area population under 2,500

Small and Rural Public Libraries

In Fiscal Year 2011 (FY2011), the most recent year for which data are available, there were 8,956 public libraries in the United States.[3] Most of these public libraries can be categorized as small (77.1%), with legal service area populations of less than 25,000. Similarly, almost half of all public libraries were rural libraries (46.8%). **Figure 1** highlights the substantial overlap between these two categories: 43.4% of all public libraries in the U.S. were both small and rural.
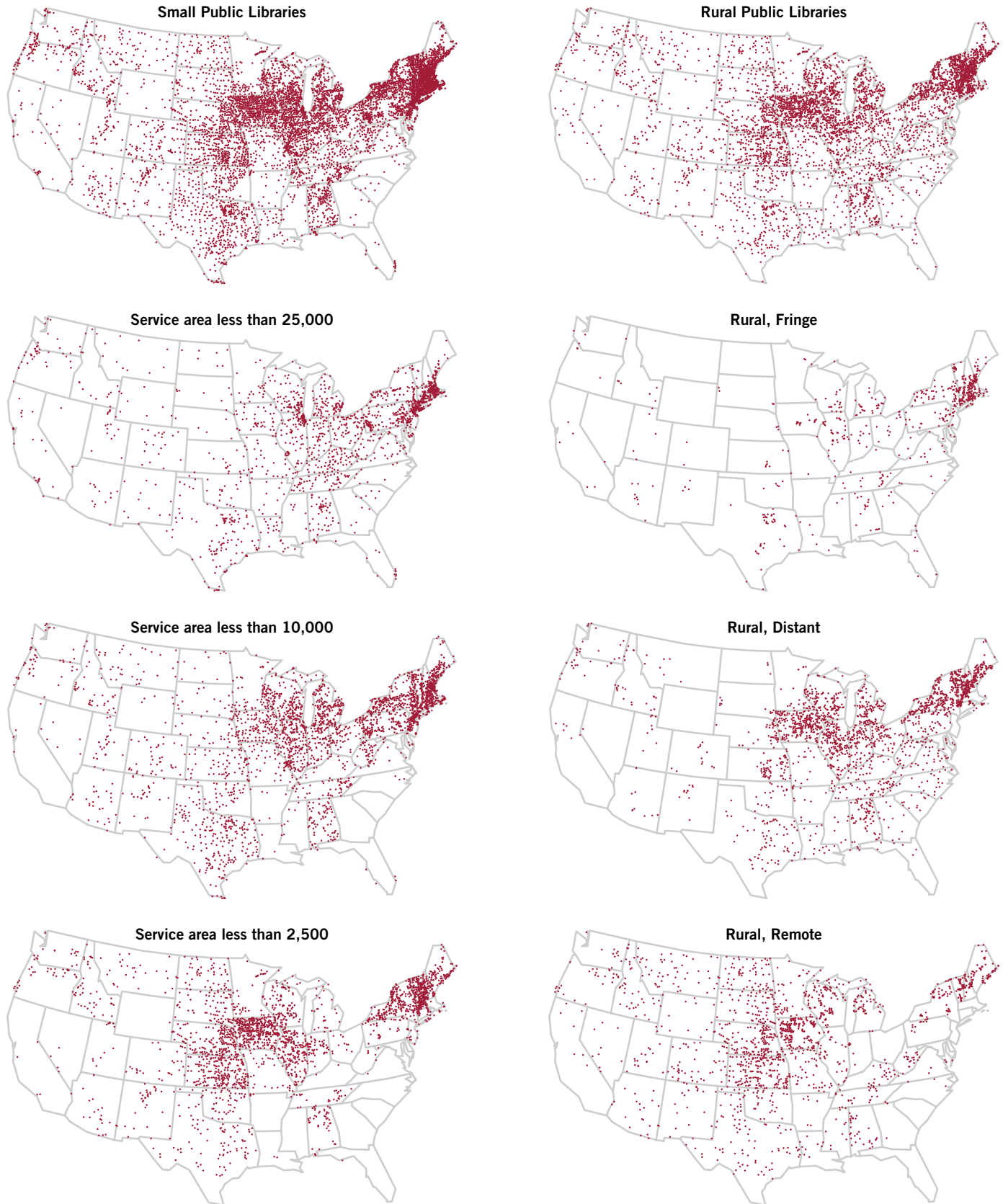

Figure 1. Designation of Public Libraries as Small and Rural, FY2011

Source: Public Libraries Survey (PLS) FY 2011, Institute of Museum and Library Services.

This overlap, however, highlights an unexpected finding. The terms "small" and "rural" are often conflated, but there is not always a direct correspondence between the two. Although most rural libraries (92.8%) are also small, only half of small libraries (56.3%) were located in rural areas.

Figure 2 provides graphic representations of the distribution of each category of small and rural public libraries for the entire county. **Table 1** provides a more detailed look at the distribution of small and rural public libraries for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. As expected, there was substantial variability across all states in the proportion of small and rural libraries. The per-

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3   The analysis is conducted at the level of the library administrative entity, which could be either a multi-outlet library system or a single-outlet library. For administrative entities with more than one branch, the locale code was assigned based on the modal locale code of all outlets of that public library.

Figure 2: Distribution of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States

Small Public Libraries

Rural Public Libraries

Service area less than 25,000

Rural, Fringe

Service area less than 10,000

Rural, Distant

Service area less than 2,500

Rural, Remote

Source: Public Library Survey (PLS), FY 2008 – 2011, Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Table 1: Small and Rural Public Libraries by State

State	# Public Libraries	Rural*			% Rural Libraries	Small**			% Small Libraries
		Fringe	Distant	Remote		10K to 25K	2.5K to 10K	up to 2.5K	
AK - Alaska	72	2	3	55	83.3%	3	16	48	93.1%
AL - Alabama	212	17	66	30	53.3%	55	73	44	81.1%
AR - Arkansas	55	-	13	6	34.5%	11	6	4	38.2%
AZ - Arizona	90	9	10	20	43.3%	12	28	21	67.8%
CA - California	182	5	6	7	9.9%	23	4	4	17.0%
CO - Colorado	114	2	12	47	53.5%	20	37	30	76.3%
CT - Connecticut	183	47	16	-	34.4%	65	62	19	79.8%
DC - District of Columbia	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE - Delaware	21	3	2	-	23.8%	8	5	-	61.9%
FL - Florida	77	6	6		15.6%	12	4	1	22.1%
GA - Georgia	61	5	11	2	29.5%	6	-	-	9.8%
HI - Hawaii	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IA - Iowa	531	15	229	170	78.0%	39	127	340	95.3%
ID - Idaho	101	6	21	34	60.4%	13	33	40	85.1%
IL - Illinois	621	33	170	33	38.0%	127	201	183	82.3%
IN - Indiana	238	9	85	7	42.4%	49	82	52	76.9%
KS - Kansas	311	8	63	162	74.9%	19	63	215	95.5%
KY - Kentucky	118	2	24	23	41.5%	58	16	1	63.6%
LA - Louisiana	68	5	15	8	41.2%	23	5	2	44.1%
MA - Massachusets	359	59	40	-	27.6%	109	116	64	80.5%
MD - Maryland	24	1	5	-	25.0%	1	-	-	4.2%
ME - Maine	214	16	85	56	73.4%	22	100	89	98.6%
MI - Michigan	389	28	103	59	48.8%	88	178	32	76.6%
MN - Minnesota	138	4	26	47	55.8%	19	46	45	79.7%
MO - Missouri	147	2	19	46	45.6%	31	48	31	74.8%
MS - Mississippi	50	2	8	11	42.0%	7	6		26.0%
MT - Montana	81	-	7	50	70.4%	11	35	27	90.1%
NC - North Carolina	77	4	21	3	36.4%	6	3	-	11.7%
ND - North Dakota	76	-	3	59	81.6%	7	11	51	90.8%
NE - Nebraska	216	3	34	129	76.9%	8	32	168	96.3%
NH - New Hampshire	221	41	91	32	74.2%	17	92	109	98.6%
NJ - New Jersey	281	9	1	-	3.6%	94	100	10	72.6%
NM - New Mexico	82	4	11	21	43.9%	12	27	32	86.6%
NV - Nevada	22	1	1	9	50.0%	2	6	4	54.5%
NY - New York	756	69	211	51	43.8%	145	274	216	84.0%

Table 1: Small and Rural Public Libraries by State (continued)

State	# Public Libraries	Rural*			% Rural Libraries	Small**			% Small Libraries
		Fringe	Distant	Remote		10K to 25K	2.5K to 10K	up to 2.5K	
OH - Ohio	251	11	68	1	31.9%	66	75	11	60.6%
OK - Oklahoma	117	5	18	32	47.0%	18	41	45	88.9%
OR - Oregon	126	4	18	27	38.9%	28	36	32	76.2%
PA - Pennsylvania	456	22	60	12	20.6%	141	154	37	72.8%
RI - Rhode Island	48	8	2	-	20.8%	22	16	1	81.3%
SC - South Carolina	42	1	12	-	31.0%	5	-	-	11.9%
SD - South Dakota	103	4	11	66	78.6%	8	22	68	95.1%
TN - Tennessee	185	17	51	20	47.6%	53	50	25	69.2%
TX - Texas	553	38	70	83	34.5%	113	218	82	74.7%
UT - Utah	72	5	8	19	44.4%	15	25	12	72.2%
VA - Virginia	91	7	25	8	44.0%	20	7	2	31.9%
VT - Vermont	159	17	71	38	79.2%	9	47	101	98.7%
WA - Washington	61	3	13	11	44.3%	12	10	15	60.7%
WI - Wisconsin	382	15	123	88	59.2%	73	164	97	87.4%
WV - West Virginia	97	6	29	19	55.7%	27	46	5	80.4%
WY - Wyoming	23	-	-	12	52.2%	8	6	1	65.2%
Total (U.S.)	8,956	580	1,997	1,613	46.8%	1,740	2,753	2,416	77.1%
		6.5%	22.3%	18.0%		19.4%	30.7%	27.0%	

* Rural designation is based upon the urban-centric locale codes used in the Common Core of Data.
** Small designation is based on the size of the unduplicated service population.

centage of rural libraries in a state may be a reflection of population density, but it may also reflect library legislation or administrative structure (single- versus multi-outlet libraries).

States varied in the proportion of rural libraries, from 3.6% to 83.3% of public libraries. In 10 states, rural libraries comprised 70% or more of the public libraries (**Table 1**). Alaska (83.3%) and North Dakota (81.6%) had the highest percentage of libraries in a rural area. In three states – New Jersey (3.6%), California (9.9%), and Florida (15.6%)[4] – fewer than 20% of libraries were in a rural area.

Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the percent-age of libraries that fall within these small and rural library categories. Overall there were 4,109 public libraries in rural areas of the U.S.[5] in FY2011. The vast majority of these libraries fall into the subcategories of rural-distant (47.7%) or rural-remote (38.5%), and over half of rural public libraries serve populations of less than 2,500 people. As might be expected, the overwhelming majority of city libraries serve populations in excess of 25,000 people. Indeed, the median service population for city libraries is 99,743, compared to the median service population for rural libraries, which is 2,244.

It is important to note that there is not a direct relationship between the number of libraries found in each

4   Neither Hawaii nor the District of Columbia had any public libraries that were classified as either rural or small.

5   For the purpose of this brief, "in the U.S." refers to the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Table 2: Distribution of Public Libraries by Population Service Size Category, FY 2011

	Medium to Large	Small (10 to 25K)	Small (2.5 to 10 K)	Small (< 2.5K)	% Libraries	# Libraries
City	94.6%	3.7%	1.4%	0.2%	5.4%	483
Suburb	39.3%	35.8%	22.7%	2.2%	23.0%	2,058
Town	21.6%	30.9%	43.1%	4.4%	24.8%	2,225
Rural	7.2%	7.1%	31.5%	54.2%	46.8%	4,190

category and the size of the population served. Overall, rural libraries in the U.S. target a population[6] of 37,030,458 people for library services, which amounts to just over 12% of the target library service population in the United States. In contrast, city libraries, which are far fewer in number, target a service population of over 104 million people (34.9% of the U.S. population).

Services in Rural Public Libraries
In FY2011, there were 167.6 million recorded visits to rural public libraries. Median visitation to rural public libraries was 11,282. Average visitation per capita at rural public libraries was 6.7 visits per year; the average visitation per capita at rural remote libraries was 7.6 visits per year. Although visitation to rural public libraries decreased by 3.9% from FY2010, it has increased by 4.2% over the past three years. In contrast, there were 519.1 million visits to city public libraries in FY2011. For comparative purposes, the average visitation per capita at city public libraries was 5.7. Visitation has declined by 1.7% in city libraries over the past three years.

Across all rural public libraries, 241.9 million materials were circulated to the public. Although overall circulation decreased by 5.9% from FY2010, there was a three-year increase of 4.4%. Median circulation in rural libraries was 15,847. The highest levels of circulation were in rural-fringe libraries, with a median circulation of 41,408. The average circulation per capita for rural libraries was 8.7.

Service hours have remained fairly stable for rural libraries for the past 3 years. Rural libraries in the U.S. were open for a total of 10.6 million service hours across all outlets, resulting in an average of 33.5 hours per outlet

each week. In contrast, city libraries were open for an average of 42.7 hours each week, which was a three-year decrease of 7.2%.
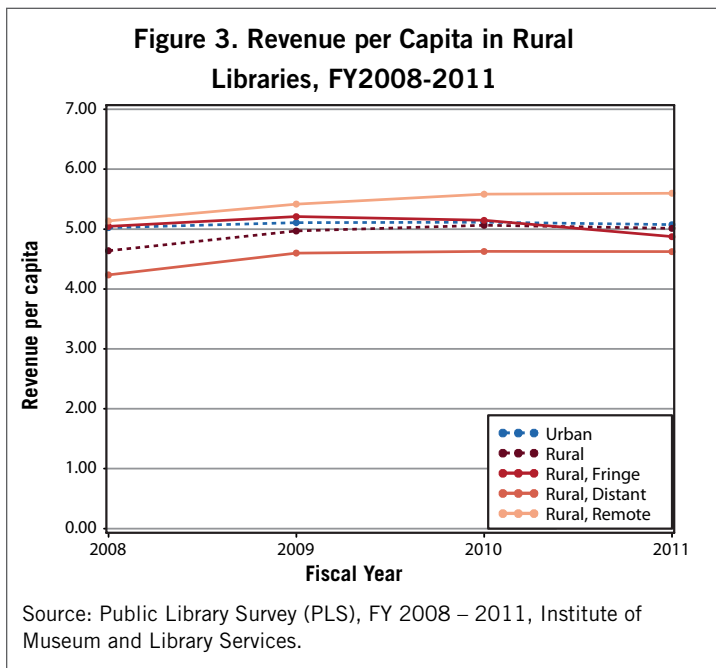
Revenue in Rural Public Libraries
Revenue has fallen for most public libraries since the recession. Rural libraries had $1.09 billion in total revenue in FY2011, a one-year decrease of 3.4%. The median revenue for rural libraries overall was $69,215. However, there was wide variability across rural libraries, ranging from $0 to $20.4 million, and there is a significant relationship between the size of a library's service area population and revenue ($r = 0.84$), with eight rural libraries serving populations in excess of 250,000 people. In FY2011, more than 90% of the rural libraries had revenue of less than $500,000. Median revenue for rural-fringe libraries was $174,970; for rural-remote libraries, median revenue was $53,235. Most public library revenue typically comes from local government sources. In FY2011, rural libraries received 80.2% of total revenue from local government sources and 10.3% from state government, a three-year increase of 4.5% in local revenue and decrease of 20.4% in state revenue. In contrast to rural libraries, urban libraries had $4.29 billion in revenue in FY2011. Whereas revenue for city libraries began to decline in FY2008, rural library revenues did not decline until FY2009.

One measure of capacity for public libraries is revenue per capita, a ratio of the total revenue to the number of people in the legal service area. In other words, the amount of revenue the library has available to serve each person. Across all rural libraries, revenue per capita was $29.44, a three-year decrease of 3.3% (**Figure 3**). In comparison, revenue per capita for city libraries was $40.06, a three-year decrease of 6.1%. The median revenue per capita was $32.10 for rural libraries; for city libraries, it

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6   All population references are based upon unduplicated service area population estimates.

was $36.62. Although city areas have more money for each person, they have experienced a more dramatic decrease in funds over the past three years.

Figure 3. Revenue per Capita in Rural Libraries, FY2008-2011

Source: Public Library Survey (PLS), FY 2008 – 2011, Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Electronic Resources in Rural Public Libraries

Rural areas have less access to broadband services than urban areas, and proximity to an urban area is a greater factor in access than population density. In order to mitigate this disparity in access, rural libraries have made additional efforts to increase their electronic resources. There were 49,048 publicly accessible computer terminals in rural libraries in FY2011, a three-year increase of 20.2%. The median number of terminals in rural libraries was six. These terminals were used over 41.3 million times, a three-year increase of 6.7%. In contrast, the use of publicly accessible computer terminals in city libraries has decreased by 9.5% over the past three years. This trend in city libraries may not reflect the need for digital resources in public libraries, but rather locale differences in how patrons use technology in public libraries.[7]

Rural libraries had 10.3 million e-books available to the public in FY2011. Of the 1,475 rural libraries

(35.2%) that include e-books in their collections, the median number of e-books was 2,578 per library.

Staffing at Rural Public Libraries

A particular challenge for rural libraries is staffing. Rural libraries have difficulty finding and retaining academically trained staff (Hildreth, 2007). In light of the economic recession and accompanying unemployment, it has been important to look at the public library workforce.

Nationally, the public library workforce has shown a decrease since FY2008 (Swan, et al., 2013). Overall, staffing levels have decreased in rural libraries over the past three years, but not by as much as that experienced by city libraries. Rural libraries provided 17,090 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, 7,412 of which were positions for librarians (FTE). Rural libraries accounted for 12.4% of employment across all libraries in the U.S., 15.9% of all librarian positions in public libraries. One-third of rural librarians (FTEs) held a Master's of Library Science (MLS) from a program accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). The number of ALA-MLS librarians in rural libraries has increased by 2.6% over the past three years. In contrast, ALA-MLS librarians have decreased by 7.8% in urban libraries during the same time period. The median number of librarians (FTE) per library was 1.0. Many public libraries in rural-distant and rural-remote areas did not have librarians who worked a full-time schedule (i.e., 40 hour week). Median total staff at rural libraries was 1.5. In contrast, urban librarians had a median of 44.7 staff, 14.0 of whom held the position title of librarian. Total staff in urban libraries has decreased by 8.9% over the past three years.

Small Libraries in the United States

There were 6,909 public libraries (77.1%) in the U.S. that had a legal service area population of less than 25,000 in FY2011. Most small libraries (74.8%) had a service population of less than 10,000. Overall, small libraries served a population of 46.0 million people, 15.4% of the total population served by public libraries. Most small public libraries were in towns (25.3%) or rural areas (56.3%). Perhaps not surprisingly, very few small public libraries are in cities (0.4%), as shown in **Table 3**.

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7   The usage of mobile devices in libraries has increased since 2009. See the Rainie et al. (2012) and Bertot et al. (2010).

Table 3. Distribution of Public Libraries by Population Size and Locale, FY2011

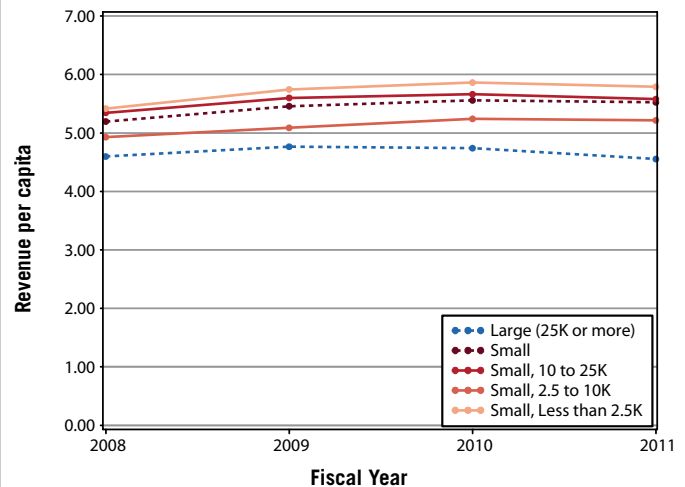|	City	Suburban	Town	Rural	% Libraries	# Libraries
Medium to Large	22.3%	39.5%	23.4%	14.8%	22.9%	2,047
Small	0.4%	18.1%	25.3%	56.3%	77.1%	6,909
Small (10 to 25K)	1.0%	42.4%	39.5%	17.1%	19.4%	1,740
Small (2.5 to 10K)	0.3%	17.0%	34.8%	47.9%	30.7%	2,753
Small (less than 2.5K)	0.0%	1.9%	4.1%	94.0%	27.0%	2,416

Similar to dispersion of rural libraries, there is variability across the states in the proportion of small public libraries (**Table 1**). The percentage of small libraries in a state may be a reflection of population density, but it may also reflect library legislation or other incentives designed to encourage larger units of service to realize economies of scale. States with fewer single-outlet administrative entities may have outlets that serve rural or small communities, but this may be masked by their association with a multiple-outlet administrative entity. For example, the formula for allocation of State Aid to Public Libraries in North Carolina recognizes the county as an effective government unit for providing sustainable library service, and there is additional incentive for multicounty regional systems.

Small public libraries comprised from 4.2 to 98.7% of public libraries within individual states. In 10 states, small libraries comprised 90% or more of the public libraries. Vermont (98.7%), Maine (98.6%), and New Hampshire (98.6%) had the highest percentage of small libraries. In five states, fewer than 20% of public libraries had service area populations less than 25,000. Maryland (4.2%) and Georgia (9.8%) had the lowest percentage of small libraries.

Services at Small Public Libraries

There were 301.2 million visits to small public libraries in FY2011. The median number of visits for a small library was 21,222, ranging from 85,055 for libraries with larger service area populations (10,000 to 24,999) to 6,338 for the smallest service areas (less than 2,500 people). Visitation per capita was 5.5 for all small libraries, representing a three-year increase of 4.6% (**Figure 4**). In contrast, median visitation per capita for medium-to-large libraries (with service area populations of 25,000 or more) was 4.5; a three-year decrease of 1.4%.

Figure 4. Visitation Per Capita at Small Public Libraries, FY2008-2011

Source: Public Library Survey (PLS), FY 2008 – 2011, Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Small libraries circulated a total of 407.3 million materials in FY2011, a three-year increase of 2.7%. By comparison, medium-to-large libraries circulated 3.0 billion materials, a three-year increase of 8.2%. The median circulation for small libraries was 28,907, ranging from 8,294 for libraries with a service population of less than 2,500 to 109,350 for small libraries with the largest service area population (10 to 25K). Median circulation per capita was 7.5. Circulation per capita decreased from FY2010, but showed a 2.9% increase over three years.

Revenue at Small Public Libraries

Revenue to public libraries has decreased nationally since FY2009. Revenue at small libraries was $1.99 billion for FY2011, a one-year decrease of 1.3%. Median revenue for small libraries was $127,033, but there was wide variability across small libraries based on service area population. In the largest of the small libraries (10 to 25K),

median revenue was $511,204; in the smallest (less than 2.5K), median revenue was $41,287. Revenue per capita for small libraries was $34.63, with a range from $32.11 (service population 2,500 to 9,999) to $37.03 (service population less than 2,500).

Electronic Resources at Small Public Libraries

There were 71,366 publicly accessible computers at small libraries across the U.S., a three-year increase of 18.1%. The median number of computers for small libraries was seven; the number of computers at small libraries ranged from 0 to 117. In contrast, there were 190,047 computers at libraries with service area populations of 25,000 or more. There were 63.4 million uses of public-access computers at small libraries in FY2011, a one-year decrease of 3.3%. In contrast, uses of public-access computers at large libraries (over 25,000) decreased by 8.0%. This may be because of the decrease in visitation or because of the ubiquity of mobile devices as a platform for library patrons to access library resources.

Small libraries had 21.1 million e-books available to the public, 60.2% of all e-book holdings across the U.S. Small libraries have increased their e-books by 194.3% over three years. Of the 2,933 small libraries (42.4%) that had e-books in their collections, the median number of e-books was 2929.

Staffing at Small Public Libraries

Maintaining the workforce at small public libraries can be particularly difficult. In many small libraries, the total staff can be one person who works less than 40 hours each week. Unlike in some library systems where, during times of budget cuts, positions can be eliminated for a cost savings, small libraries cannot sacrifice their human resources.

Small libraries in the U.S. provided 29,329 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, 21.4% of all FTEs offered by public libraries in FY2011. Like many sectors, staffing at public libraries has decreased since the recession. However, small libraries experienced a three-year decrease of 1.2%, compared to the decrease of 6.6% by their larger peers (libraries with service populations greater than 25,000). Librarians comprised 13,604 of the total FTEs, 40.7% of whom held an ALA-MLS degree.

The total paid staff is an indicator that is closely tied to size. The median number of total staff (FTEs) was 2.5, with

1.0 librarian positions. More telling of the heterogeneity of small libraries is the variation across the different population levels: median staffing levels from 7.9 FTEs in the larger small libraries to 0.9 in the smallest. Thus, in some of the smallest public libraries, one person is entrusted with duties as diverse as cataloging, program administration, and outreach.

Conclusions

One of the surprising findings in this review is the sheer number of public libraries that can be classified as either small or rural. Their broad distribution across the country speaks volumes about the value local communities place on library services. Despite fiscal challenges and rapid technological changes, services in small and rural public libraries continue to evolve to serve the unique needs of their communities. The fact that service utilization continues to increase at these libraries at a time when other libraries are experiencing declines on a per capita basis is a further testament to their resilience and continued relevance to rural life.

This increase in use of small and rural libraries may be due the fact that other services in rural communities are contracting as a result financial challenges. Small and rural libraries, which are present in so many communities, serve a strategic role in extending public services to residents that may be hard to reach by other means. Many small and rural libraries are accustomed to linking what might be considered traditional library services with a variety of other social, educational and economic development programs. Other agencies are seeing the value of their roles as well. For example, the U.S. Postal Service has used Public Library Survey data to identify library locations in communities where post offices were likely to see reduced hours. This analysis identified as many as 2,450 libraries in the affected areas that could provide services through the new Village Post Office program.[8]

In addition to broadening service options in rural communities, rural libraries have made significant investments in connectivity and digital technology. In comparison to

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8   For more on the Village Post Office, see the IMLS Blog at http://blog.imls.gov/?p=1705 and Library Journal at http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2012/08/library-services/libraries-could-double-as-post-offices.

urban public libraries, rural libraries have outpaced them in building infrastructure and resources, with higher levels of publicly accessible Internet computers and e-books. In conjunction with the disparity of broadband access in rural communities, this further emphasizes the strong role public libraries play in providing access to the critical digital resources that are directly related to 21st-century skills.

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About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov.

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Director, Carlos Manjarrez

Suggested Citation

Swan, D.W., Grimes, J. & Owens, T. (2013). *The State of Small and Rural Libraries in the United States.* Research Brief series, no. 5 (IMLS-2013-RB-05). Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Public Libraries Survey

The Public Libraries Survey (PLS) is a national census of public library systems. It is conducted annually by the Institute of Museum and Library Services in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau, State Library Administrative Agencies, and the Library Statistics Working Group. Its data elements cover library service measures of public library services, resources, and funding. The PLS is designed as a universe survey; its survey frame consists of 9,217 public libraries in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and selected US territories.

Appendix: Table A. Descriptive Statistics for Rural Public Libraries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Services				
Visitation				
Rural	39,992	11,282	21	3,283,898
Rural Fringe	72,777	25,693	257	1,881,264
Rural Distant	43,677	11,180	21	3,283,898
Rural Remote	23,640	8,580	160	1,135,265
Visitation, per capita				
Rural	6.7	5.0	0.0	211.2
Rural Fringe	6.5	4.9	0.1	62.7
Rural Distant	6.0	4.6	0.0	98.5
Rural Remote	7.6	5.6	0.1	211.2
Circulation				
Rural	57,730	15,847	48	4,437,942
Rural Fringe	115,855	41,408	171	2,778,783
Rural Distant	62,433	16,310	48	4,437,942
Rural Remote	31,007	11,311	104	2,045,346
Circulation, per capita				
Rural	8.7	6.9	0.0	144.4
Rural Fringe	9.7	7.7	0.1	94.9
Rural Distant	8.0	6.4	0.1	75.4
Rural Remote	9.3	7.3	0.0	144.4
Revenue				
Revenue				
Rural	$260,196	$69,215	$0	$20,373,817
Rural Fringe	$505,763	$174,970	$5,300	$8,753,016
Rural Distant	$277,091	$69,522	$1,000	$20,373,817
Rural Remote	$150,979	$53,235	$0	$10,714,390
Revenue, per capita				
Rural	$42.40	$32.10	$0.00	$1,186.29
Rural Fringe	$44.94	$32.88	$0.65	$680.21
Rural Distant	$37.22	$30.02	$0.28	$561.94
Rural Remote	$47.89	$34.77	$0.00	$1,186.29
Electronic Resources				
PC Terminals				
Rural	12	6	0	402
Rural Fringe	16	8	0	402
Rural Distant	12	6	0	355
Rural Remote	9	6	0	280
PC Uses (per 1,000 Visits)				
Rural	9,855	2,813	0	650,641
Rural Fringe	15,811	4,241	0	650,641
Rural Distant	11,098	2,811	0	628,309
Rural Remote	6,173	2,436	0	463,965
E-Books				
Rural	2,463	0	0	93,829
Rural Fringe	2,994	7	0	52,024
Rural Distant	2,735	0	0	91,317
Rural Remote	1,935	0	0	93,829
Staffing				
Librarians				
Rural	1.8	1.0	0	91
Rural Fringe	2.9	1.4	0	50
Rural Distant	1.8	0.9	0	91
Rural Remote	1.3	0.8	0	29

Appendix: Table A. Descriptive Statistics for Rural Public Libraries (continued)

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Total Staff				
Rural	4.1	1.5	0.0	249.8
Rural Fringe	7.3	3.0	0.1	196.8
Rural Distant	4.4	1.5	0.0	249.8
Rural Remote	2.4	1.1	0.1	87.9
Programs				
Programs (total)				
Rural	151	57	0	10,077
Rural Fringe	274	155	0	10,077
Rural Distant	161	61	0	8,236
Rural Remote	93	36	0	3,276
Children's Programs				
Rural	95	37	0	5,873
Rural Fringe	162	92	0	1,996
Rural Distant	103	40	0	5,873
Rural Remote	62	23	0	2,303
Program Attendance (total)				
Rural	21.4	15.9	0.0	1,867.0
Rural Fringe	19.6	16.7	0.0	96.4
Rural Distant	21.5	16.0	0.0	351.0
Rural Remote	21.9	15.5	0.0	1,867.0

Appendix: Table B. Descriptive Statistics for Small Public Libraries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Services				
Visitation				
Small	43,599	21,222	0	860,964
Small (10 to 25K)	101,595	85,055	443	860,964
Small (2.5 to 10K)	37,396	26,294	173	747,448
Small (Less than 2.5K)	8,898	6,338	0	135,660
Visitation, per capita				
Small	7.1	5.5	0.0	211.2
Small (10 to 25K)	6.4	5.6	0.0	44.9
Small (2.5 to 10K)	6.8	5.2	0.1	107.1
Small (Less than 2.5K)	8.0	5.8	0.0	211.2
Circulation				
Small	58,943	28,907	48	1,260,950
Small (10 to 25K)	140,716	109,350	832	1,260,950
Small (2.5 to 10K)	48,715	36,631	100	772,023
Small (Less than 2.5K)	11,704	8,294	48	171,405
Circulation, per capita				
Small	9.2	7.5	0.0	144.4
Small (10 to 25K)	8.8	7.4	0.0	52.0
Small (2.5 to 10K)	8.9	7.3	0.0	109.7
Small (Less than 2.5K)	10.0	7.7	0.1	144.4
Revenue				
Revenue				
Small	$288,255	$127,033	$0	$6,021,810
Small (10 to 25K)	$705,991	$511,204	$5,000	$6,021,810
Small (2.5 to 10K)	$227,141	$157,675	$0	$3,897,450
Small (Less than 2.5K)	$57,041	$41,287	$719	$2,742,918

Appendix: Table B. Descriptive Statistics for Small Public Libraries (continued)

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Revenue, per capita				
Small	$46.21	$34.63	$0.00	$2,192.58
Small (10 to 25K)	$43.98	$34.41	$0.24	$374.62
Small (2.5 to 10K)	$40.93	$32.11	$0.00	$523.71
Small (Less than 2.5K)	$53.83	$37.03	$2.47	$2,192.58
Electronic Resources				
PC Terminals				
Small	10	7	0	117
Small (10 to 25K)	18	15	0	117
Small (2.5 to 10K)	10	8	0	65
Small (Less than 2.5K)	5	4	0	42
PC Uses (per 1,000 Visits)				
Small	277	224	0	21,714
Small (10 to 25K)	239	201	0	2,267
Small (2.5 to 10K)	266	216	0	13,831
Small (Less than 2.5K)	318	260	0	21,714
E-Books				
Small	3,051	0	0	155,801
Small (10 to 25K)	4,687	386	0	155,801
Small (2.5 to 10K)	3,380	0	0	100,000
Small (Less than 2.5K)	1,496	0	0	91,317
Staffing				
Librarians				
Small	2.0	1.0	0	22
Small (10 to 25K)	3.9	3.0	0	22
Small (2.5 to 10K)	1.8	1.0	0	18
Small (Less than 2.5K)	0.8	0.7	0	7
Total Staff				
Small	4.2	2.5	0.0	54.2
Small (10 to 25K)	9.5	7.9	0.0	54.2
Small (2.5 to 10K)	3.7	3.0	0.0	33.0
Small (Less than 2.5K)	1.1	0.9	0.1	19.8
Programs				
Progams (total)				
Small	168	91	0	4,057
Small (10 to 25K)	336	263	0	2,844
Small (2.5 to 10K)	159	109	0	4,057
Small (Less than 2.5K)	56	32	0	1,145
Children's Programs				
Small	104	58	0	2,927
Small (10 to 25K)	208	166	0	2,223
Small (2.5 to 10K)	99	68	0	2,927
Small (Less than 2.5K)	36	18	0	663
Program Attendance (total)				
Small	22.0	17.3	0.0	1,867.0
Small (10 to 25K)	23.4	20.8	0.0	291.5
Small (2.5 to 10K)	22.0	17.3	0.0	304.0
Small (Less than 2.5K)	21.1	14.5	0.0	1,867.0