

## **Mission Statement**

Guided by 22 V.S.A. §601-635, the mission of the Department of Libraries is to provide, administer, and maintain access to information in a variety of formats to the three branches of State government, libraries statewide, the general public, and Vermonters with special needs; to support, strengthen, and foster new means for statewide cooperation and resource sharing among all types of libraries and government agencies; to lead a service of advice and consultation to all libraries, in order to assist them in realizing their potential; and to increase public awareness of libraries and their services.

Inherent in this mission is the belief that libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy and that every person who lives in the State of Vermont should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research resources of libraries.

## **Executive Summary**

To fulfill its mission the Vermont Department of Libraries provides:

- reference services, interlibrary loan service, and direct access to the Department's physical and online resources to State employees and Legislators;
- State Library collections focused on Vermont legislative history, Vermontiana, management, children's literature, federal documents, public policy, and library science;
- library materials to Vermonters who are incarcerated or who reside in State psychiatric facilities; and
- direct library services to Vermonters with qualifying visual and physical disabilities through the ABLE Library (Audio, Braille, Large Print, and Electronic resources).

The Department supports resource sharing among Vermont's public, academic, and school libraries by providing electronic resources to all Vermonters including the:

- Palace Project App, a statewide platform providing access to a growing collection of digital eBook and eAudiobook titles that supplements the online collections of local public libraries;
- Vermont Online Library, a collection of vetted, licensed digital resources including full-text periodicals, online reference books, health and medical information, small business resources, language learning, and auto repair manuals;
- Udemy, an online learning platform with more than 20,000 instructional videos and classes; and
- Peterson's Career and Test Prep, an online learning platform with skill-building resources in reading, writing, math, and science; college admissions exams; occupational licensing tests; workplace skills improvement and career exploration; CDL licensing; medical licensing; and SAT, LSAT, and GRE test preparation.

The Department encourages the sharing of physical library materials statewide the state's interlibrary loan (ILL) program by:

- providing an online ILL system (CLOVER) with easy and direct access to the holdings of Vermont's libraries;
- coordinating the statewide ILL courier system;
- providing annual courier grants to public libraries that participate in ILL; and
- obtaining materials requested by Vermonters from libraries in other states and throughout the world.

The Department supports excellence in library services statewide by:

- offering a robust schedule of Continuing Education programs for library staff and trustees including the Certificate of Public Librarianship;
- providing personalized consultation services to public and school library staff and public library trustees;
- collecting data and administering state and federal surveys to benchmark current levels of library service in Vermont;
- granting funds annually to the Community Legal Information Center (CLIC) program at Vermont Law and Graduate School which provides Vermonters with access to legal information and legal reference services; and
- granting funds annually to support public libraries in providing high-quality, topical programming encouraging community dialog.

The Department promotes youth educational attainment statewide by:

- providing statewide summer reading program by issuing annual non-competitive summer reading grants to public libraries and providing thematic promotional materials to support the program to public libraries;
- providing all Vermonters with access to a collection of high-quality, high-interest online reading materials to encourage a love of reading and help maintain reading gains;
- providing continuing education, training, and consultation services focused on library service to youth;
- facilitating the Vermont Youth Book Awards to engage youth in reading and in voting for their favorite new titles; and
- providing continuing education to youth services libraries to encourage the provision of library programs and services for children, teens, and their families that foster early childhood literacy, STEAM learning, a lifelong love of reading, school readiness, and school success.

The Department administers local and federal grant funds to strengthen the capacity of Vermont's libraries to deliver quality services, build partnerships, strengthen community connections, and improve public access to information, including:

- Vermont's Grants to States annual allotment from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS);
- \$16.4M in funding from the U.S. Department of Treasury's Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund for States, Territories & Freely Associated States for public library capital improvements addressing critical building projects that support library patron access to high-speed Internet enabling work, education, and health monitoring; and
- \$10M in Congressionally Directed Funding (CDS) for Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to enable small, rural public libraries to address capital project needs.

To further its goal of ensuring all Vermonters have equitable access to modern library services, the Department works with:

- The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) which provides the Department with substantial annual funding through its Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program, benchmarks library services nationally, and supports best practices in librarianship;
- The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) the Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast (COSLINE): two communities of practice for State Library Administrative Agencies supporting excellence among State Library Agencies in the development and implementation of library services.

The Department presents the Vermont Book Award in partnership with Vermont Humanities.

The Department also regularly works with the American Library Association (ALA); Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL); Catamount Library Consortium; Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC); National Federation of the Blind of Vermont; National Library Service (Library of Congress); Northeast Organic Farming Association VT (NOFA); Preservation Trust of Vermont; Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI); Vermont Community Foundation; Vermont Council on Rural Development; Vermont Consortium of Academic Libraries (VCAL); Vermont Council of the Blind; Vermont Council on the Arts & Vermont Creative Network; Vermont Folklife Center; Vermont Historical Society; Vermont Humanities & Center for the Book; Vermont Library Association (VLA); and Vermont School Library Association (VSLA).

# Vermont Public Library FY2023 Annual Report Summary Vermont Department of Libraries



Enosburgh Public Library  
Photo – Kevin Unrath

Data compiled by Joshua Muse, Library Consultant for  
Technology Vermont Department of Libraries

## Introduction

The Public Library Annual Report is a broad statistical summary of a year in the life of a public library. Supplied annually by libraries across the nation and known as the Public Library Survey (PLS), it covers a variety of information, from visitation and programming, to finances and staffing, to circulation and holdings (both physical and digital).

The resulting data is used by a wide range of organizations to better understand and support the current library environment: The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), State (and Territorial) Libraries throughout the nation, Federal and State Government policymakers and officials, and national library leadership. At the local level, it's also heavily used by individual library staff, trustees, and local officials to see trends and compare themselves with similar institutions.

In the 2023 report, 148 of Vermont's public libraries submitted data. These libraries range from one room libraries run by volunteers and open 5 hours a week, to large libraries with multiple staff and open 50+ hours a week. Reporting is a significant undertaking, with nearly 200 questions, some of which require digging into stats, or coordination with municipal partners. We present this summary report with thanks to our library community.

## Statewide Totals from the 2023 Report

### Hours, Visits, and Borrowers

- Library Hours Open - 230,442 (up 3% from 2022)
- Annual Visits - 2,136,870 (up 23% from 2022)
- Registered Borrowers - 273,291 (down 1% from 2022)

### Circulation and Usage

- Physical Circulation - 3,046,054 (up 6% from 2021)
- eBook/eAudiobook Circulation - 724,580 (up 8% from 2022)
- Database Usage - 287,738 (not comparable with 2022)

### Interlibrary Loan

- Provided - 83,867 (up 7% from 2022)
- Received - 94,426 (up 7% from 2022)

### Programming

- Programs (In-Person and Virtual) - 26,174 (up 51% from 2022)
- Program Attendance - 338,888 (up 64% from 2022)
- Non-Library Sponsored Programs - 9,427 (up 30% from 2021)

### Items in the Collection

- Print - 2,466,905 (down 7% from 2022)
- Physical Video - 217,335 (down 3% from 2022)
- Physical Audio - 102,823 (down 12% from 2022)
- Non-Traditional Physical Items - 10,213 (down 4% from 2022)

### Computers Use and Reference Questions

- Public Computer Sessions - 155,008 (up 30% from 2022)
- WiFi Sessions - 905,664 (up 21% from 2022)
- Reference Questions - 229,947 (up 7% from 2022)

### Fun Statistical Facts

- Annual Visits - 2,136,870  
*This averages out to every single Vermonter visiting libraries more than 3.3 times in a year.*
- Physical Circulation of Items - 3,046,054  
*That's the equivalent of every single book in Fletcher Free's collection (in Burlington) being checked out more than 26 times.*
- Interlibrary Loans Provided - 83,867  
Interlibrary Loans Received - 94,426  
*At \$12.00 per item, it would have cost Vermont libraries over \$1.1 million to purchase them independently.*
- Library Programs (In-Person and Virtual) - 26,174  
*If you ran fast enough, you could attend an average of 71 library programs in Vermont every day of the year.*
- WiFi Sessions - 905,664  
*If Vermont patrons had to buy a \$3.00 cup of coffee to use the public WiFi, this would have cost them over \$2.7 million in total.*

## Vermont Library Metrics: Insights Through Median Statistics

### Median Numbers and Ranges by Question

A note on Median numbers – There are a number of ways to describe the middle or average of a group of numbers, such as mean and mode. We most often use median; to find the median, you line up the numbers lowest to highest, and find the one in the middle. Medians are especially useful where outliers (either high or low) would make the mean a poor description of a set. In Vermont, we have many small libraries, but the few (much) larger libraries would tend to skew the results, making the “middle” library look bigger than it is.

#### General:

- **Population:** 1,853  
Ranges from 278 to 44,646 residents
- **Hours Open:** 1,612 per year / 31 per week (+19%)  
Ranges from 255 to 3,016 hours
- **Registered Borrowers:** 1,055 (+2%)  
Ranges from 141 to 17,288 patrons
- **Annual Visits:** 5,845 (+28%)  
Ranges from 75 to 193,772 visits
- **Reference Questions:** 427 (+6%)  
Ranges from 0 to 27,493 questions

#### Facilities:

- **Year Building was Built:** 1912  
Ranges from 1781 to 2021
- **Square Footage:** 2,713  
Ranges from 527 to 48,348 sq. ft.

#### Staffing:

- **Total Paid Staff Hours per Week:** 57 (+14%)  
Ranges from 0 to 940 staff hours
- **Volunteer Hours per Week:** 8 (+30%)  
Ranges from 0 to 108 volunteer hours

#### Income:

- **Local Tax Support:** \$78,002 (+18%)  
Ranges from \$0 to \$2.4 million
- **Other Income:** \$11,384 (-12%)  
Ranges from \$0 to \$714,330

#### Expenses:

- **Material Expenses:** \$9,307 (+2%)  
Ranges from \$155 to \$231,879
- **Staff Expenses:** \$64,674 (+5%)  
Ranges from \$0 to \$2,017,794
- **Other Expenses:** \$20,720 (-4%)  
Ranges from \$0 to \$308,594

#### Collection:

- **Physical Circ:** 8,544 (+18%)  
Ranges from 202 to 351,251 circs
- **Electronic Circ:** 1,842 (+14%)  
Ranges from 0 to 87,308 circs
- **Physical Books in Collection:** 12,887 (+3%)  
Ranges from 2,078 to 112,984 books

#### ILL:

- **ILL Provided:** 300 (+23%)  
Ranges from 0 to 5,545 items
- **ILL Received:** 331 (+22%)  
Ranges from 0 to 7,594 items

#### Computers:

- **Public Computer Sessions:** 423 (+35%)  
Ranges from 0 to 22,299 sessions
- **WiFi Sessions:** 2,400 (+60%)  
Ranges from 5 to 105,840 sessions

#### Programming:

- **Programs:** 110 (+52%)  
Ranges from 0 to 1,070 programs
- **Program Attendance:** 1,337 (+64%)  
Ranges from 0 to 18,956 attendance

## Median Comparison Year-by-Year

Survey Year	Pop.	Weeks Open	Hours Open	Square Footage	Librarian Hours	Total Staff Hours	Local Tax Support*	Per Capita Tax Support	Other Local Income	Total Grants	Total Revenue
2018	1,849	52	1,560	2,700	33	48	\$48,949	\$27.02	\$9,907	\$1,015	\$80,020
2019	1,907	52	1,550	2,700	35	49	\$48,991	\$27.78	\$9,496	\$743	\$83,104
2020	1,918	39	1,281	2,713	35	51	\$65,790	\$29.62	\$9,446	\$590	\$89,422
2021	1,867	33	600	2,713	38	50	\$74,944	\$30.55	\$10,111	\$2,020	\$93,843
2022	1,880	52	1,352	2,720	40	50	\$66,000	\$30.15	\$13,066	\$8,366	\$108,463
2023	1,853	52	1,612	2,713	40	57	\$78,002	\$31.25	\$11,384	\$3,623	\$110,563

Survey Year	Collection Expenses	Staff Expenses	Other Expenses	Registered Patrons	Visits	Per Capita Visits	Physical Circ	eCirc
2018	\$9,123	\$47,414	\$19,700	978	7,991	3.99	9,075	921
2019	\$8,323	\$49,046	\$18,991	1,010	8,625	3.83	8,526	1,189
2020	\$8,653	\$52,765	\$18,616	1,102	6,046	2.76	7,881	1,202
2021	\$8,823	\$57,409	\$19,596	1,095	1,571	0.72	6,121	1,528
2022	\$9,064	\$61,120	\$21,627	1,025	4,543	1.94	7,181	1,605
2023	\$9,307	\$64,674	\$20,270	1,055	5,845	2.59	8,544	1,842

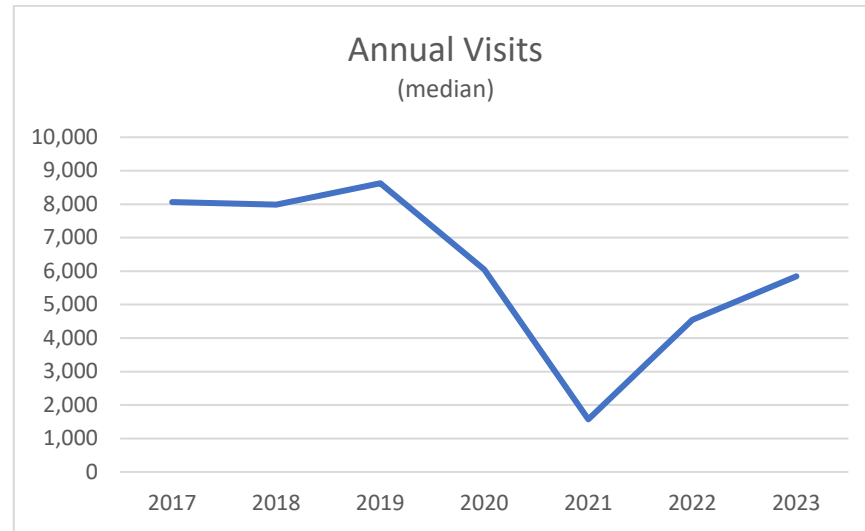
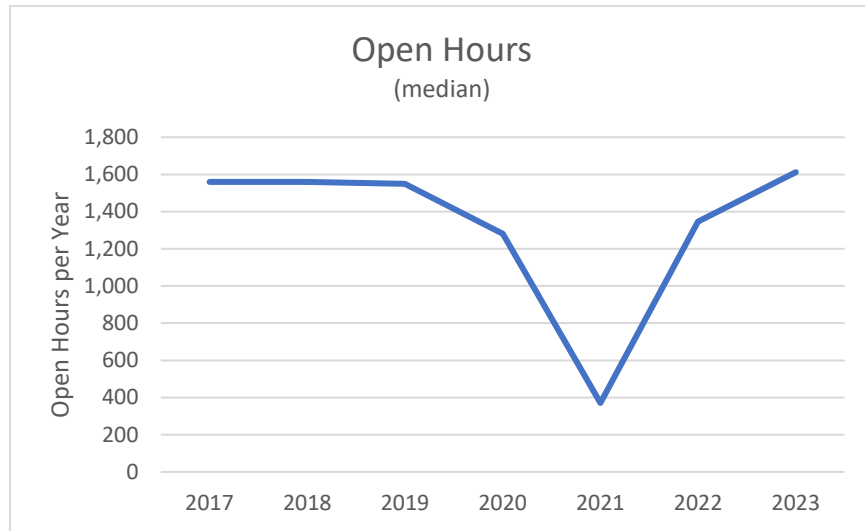
Survey Year	Programs	Program Attendance	Program Attendance Per Capita	Public Comp Uses	WiFi Sessions
2018	138	1,516	0.64	1,055	689
2019	133	1,574	0.68	949	1,200
2020	107	1,193	0.62	604	1,500
2021	37	400	0.13	100	1,400
2022	72	815	0.30	313	1,500
2023	110	1,337	0.48	423	2,400

\* Though medians are typically a good fit for our data, it can shift up or down depending on exactly which and how many libraries respond. For example, anomalies in Local Tax Support from 2021-2023 seem to be due to these year-to-year variations.

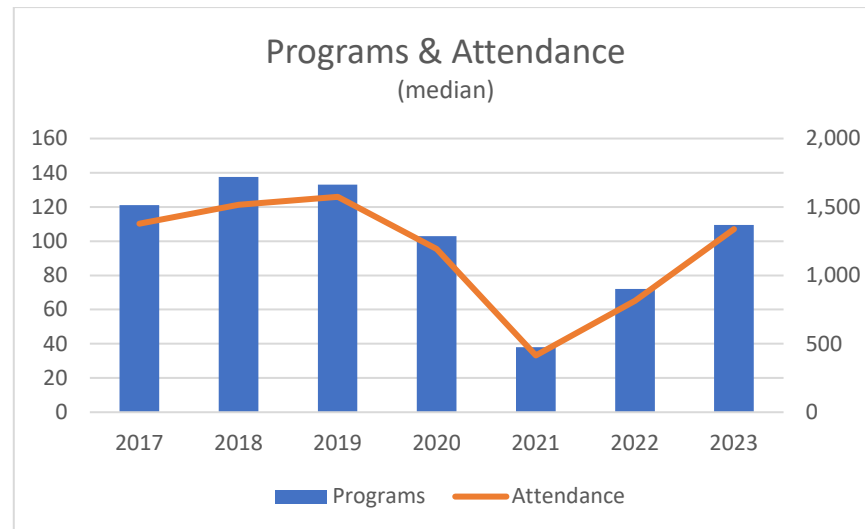
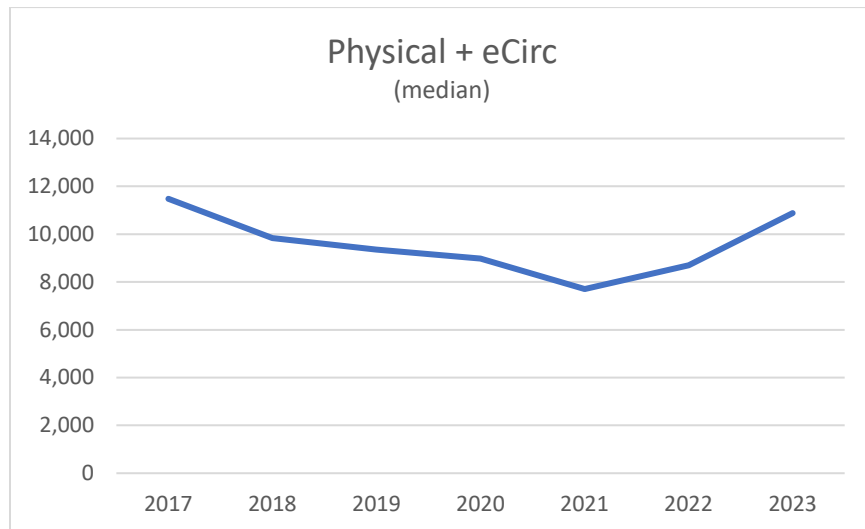


## Broad Trends Using Medians

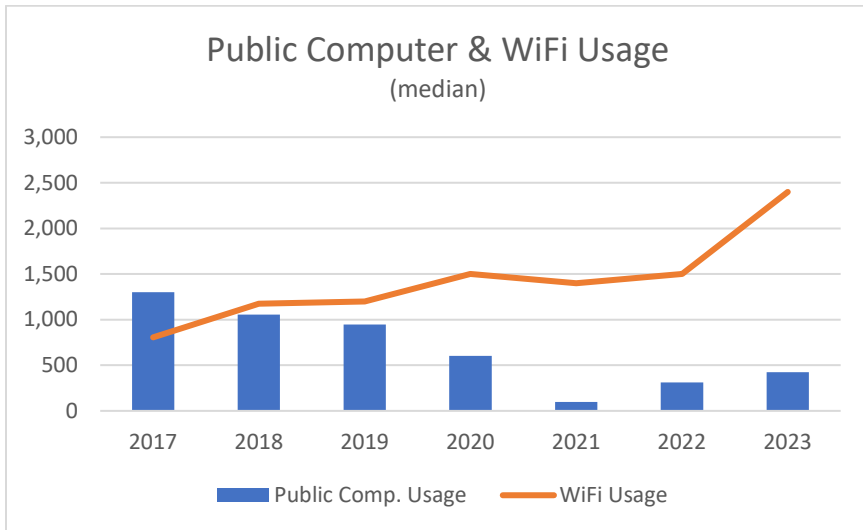
Data from the 2023 report appears to show the same trends as 2022. Many service categories continue to recover from pandemic lows, although in some cases they haven't returned to pre-pandemic highs.



Open hours have regained pre-pandemic levels, while annual visits are still catching up.



Physical and e-circulation numbers combined are close to reaching recent pre-pandemic levels. Programming is significantly up from 2022, but has yet to return to pre-pandemic heights.



Public computer usage has continued to increase from pandemic lows, though it's probably also showing a long-term decline that began before the pandemic (as personal-owned devices became more and more common). Conversely, WiFi usage continues to climb.