

# Statistical Trends in Connecticut Public Libraries, 2022

The charts below help to identify important trends in the use and management of Connecticut Public Libraries over the past several years.

Almost all Connecticut public library use measures statewide rebounded in FY2022 after two years of COVID-19 related declines that had started in mid-March 2020.

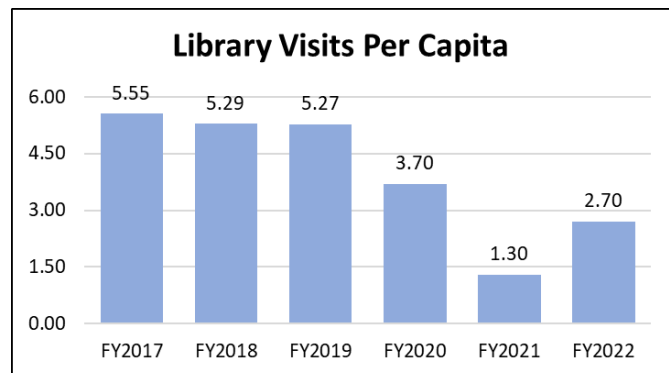
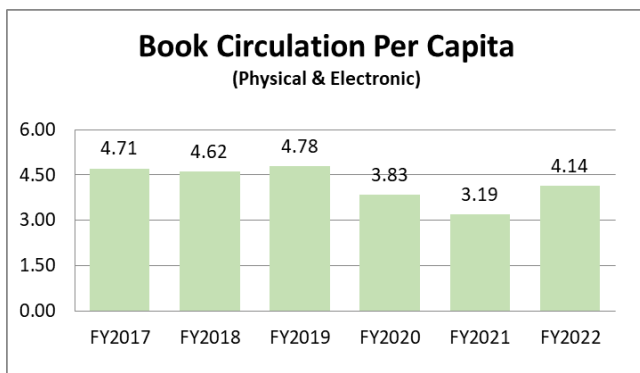
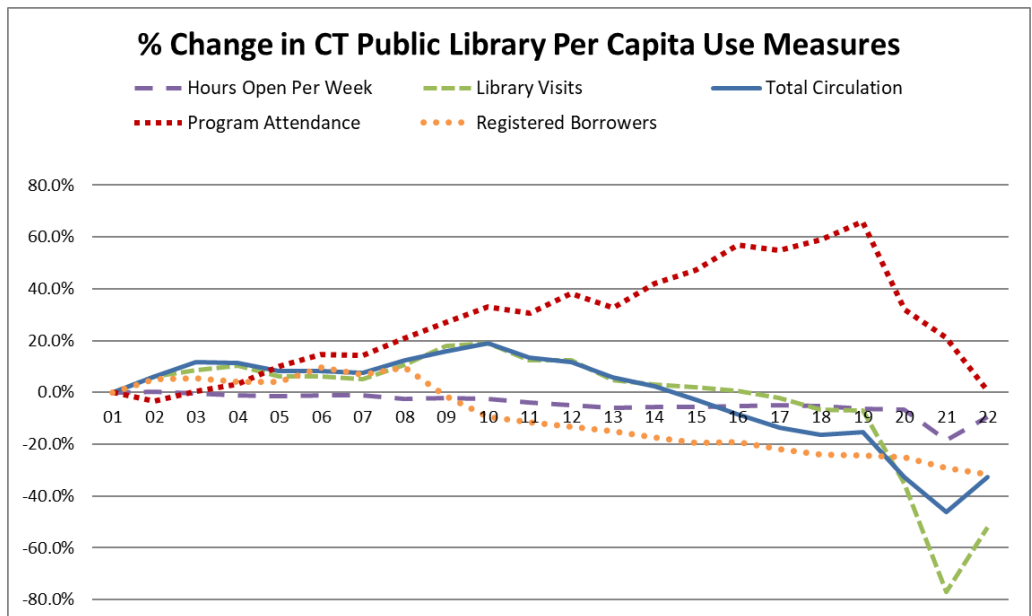
Libraries also continued to offer some pandemic-era services to their patrons, including curbside pickups, virtual programs, expanded electronic collections, and Wi-Fi access.

All the charts in this document must be evaluated with the preceding pandemic and related service changes in mind.

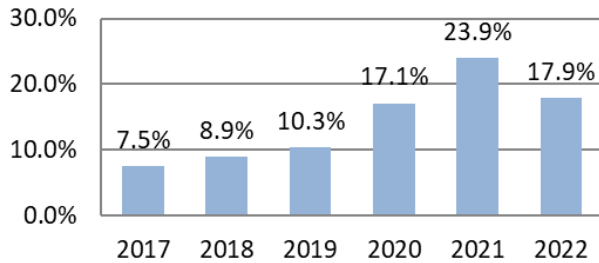
## 1. Library Use

The past two decades have seen substantial change in public library use, with gradual declines in the number of cardholders, library visits, and circulation over the past decade, while hours of operation remained fairly steady until the pandemic. Library visitation, which counts the number of people inside the library building, was most strongly impacted by COVID. Program attendance had seen strong increases over the years and would have continued that trend if not for the pandemic.

In FY2022, print and electronic book use per capita increased, and these formats represented a larger proportion of total circulation, indicating that patrons took time during the pandemic and afterward to read books more often. The increase in physical materials circulation this year, tracking with the increase in library visits, shows the importance of getting patrons into the library building to increase other use measures.

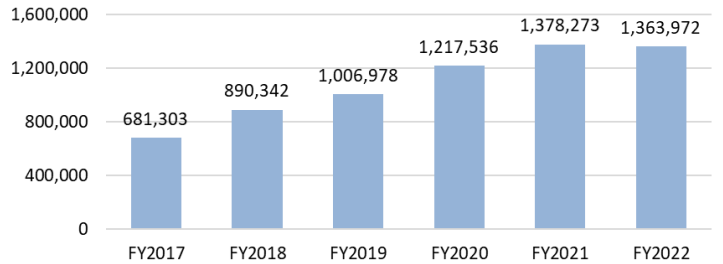


### Electronic Circulation as a % of Total Circulation

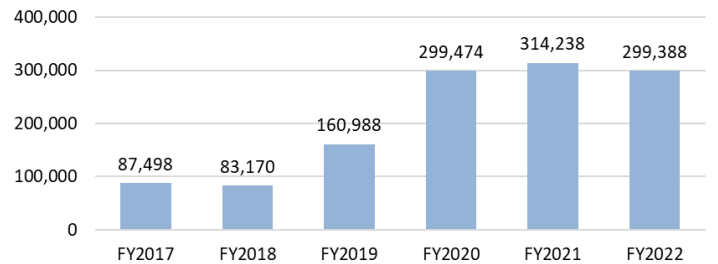


Although total circulation numbers have been on a long slide downward for more than a decade, electronic items, including e-books, e-audio, and video, represent a strong percentage of total circulation. E-media circulation saw sharp increases in FY2020 and FY2021, driven by the ease of access to those items from home. Many libraries promoted the availability of e-materials to patrons while the buildings were closed and increased their budgets for streaming video services such as Hoopla and Kanopy. These investments paid off during the pandemic, as the number of video downloads almost quadrupled over three years. However, use of all e-media formats declined in FY2022 while the use of their physical counterparts increased. As patrons visited libraries in person more often, they borrowed the physical materials they encountered there more often.

### Audio Downloads

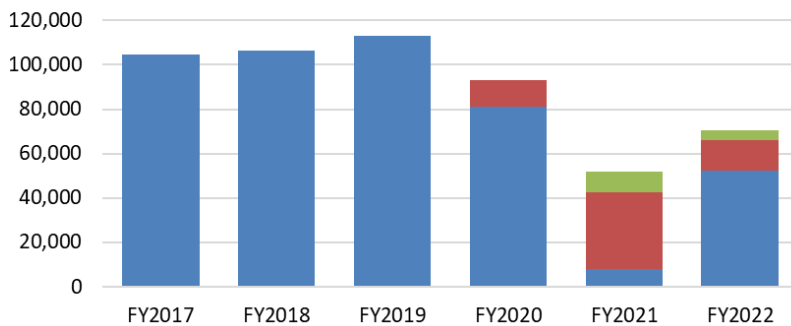


### Video Downloads



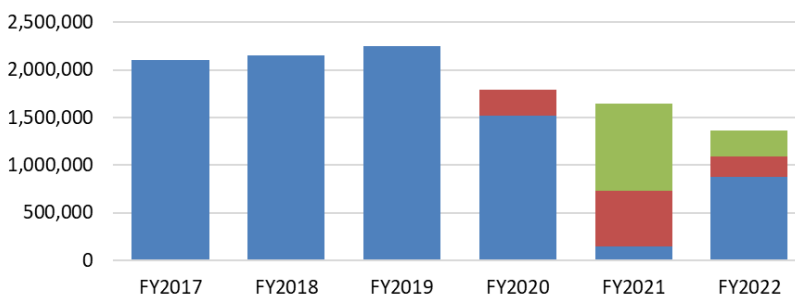
### Programs By Format

■ Prerecorded Programs ■ Live Virtual Programs ■ In-person Programs

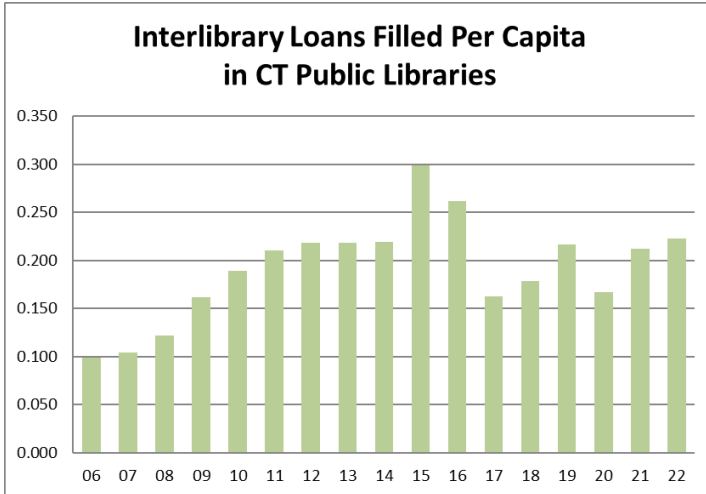


### Attendance/Views By Format

■ Prerecorded Program Views ■ Live Virtual Attendance ■ In-person Attendance



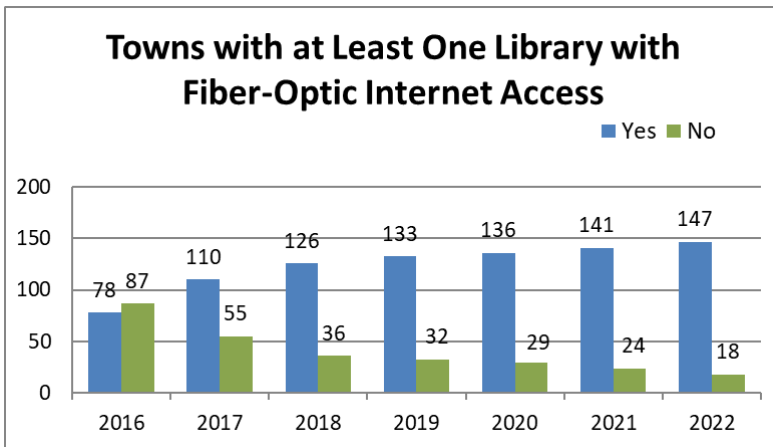
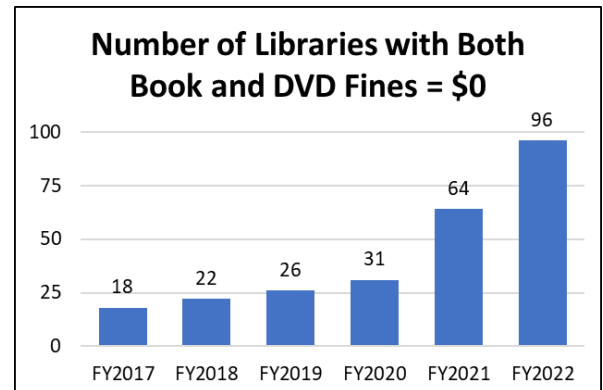
Program attendance had been the long-term success story, until the coronavirus hit. Even in the years when circulation of library materials was in a decline, attendance at library programs continued to trend upward. But the widespread closure of library buildings and ongoing requirements for social distancing put a hard stop to most library programs. Starting in mid-March 2020, libraries pivoted their program offerings from in-person to virtual, using platforms such as Zoom, Facebook Live, and YouTube. Recorded programs, which are available for viewing on-demand any time, were very successful in bringing library-created content to patrons in their homes. In FY2022, libraries resumed their in-person offerings and saw corresponding gains in attendance at those programs as people welcomed the chance to be together.



As library materials budgets shrink, libraries have become very adept at supplementing their own collections by sharing with other libraries. For many years there was a steady increase in interlibrary loans as libraries took advantage of shared collections. FY2017 saw a steep decline in ILL as the delivery system was reorganized and reworked to make it more sustainable, and ILL numbers subsequently rebounded. Then in FY2020, as libraries closed their doors and reassessed their service options, the delivery service paused operation, and libraries correspondingly paused their ILL transactions. As libraries reopened to the public, ILLs and the delivery service resumed in tandem and recovered to pre-COVID volume.

## 2. Equity and Inclusion

When the pandemic closed Connecticut public libraries in spring 2020 and staff dealt with the uncertainties of materials quarantines and full book drops, most libraries waived late fees on all materials. During the same time frame when libraries started to reopen, the growing social justice movement led many directors and boards to go fine-free officially. The number of libraries reporting that they charge no book or DVD fines tripled between FY2020 and FY2022. Related, the number of libraries that automatically renew materials, preventing the accrual of overdue fines, increased from 58 in FY2020 to 101 this year.

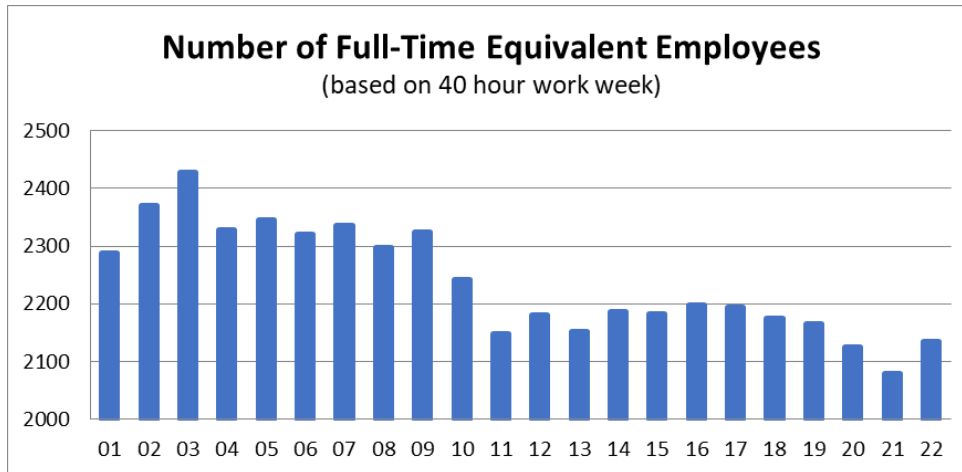


The pandemic revealed that there is a continuing critical demand in Connecticut for public internet access, whether hard-wired or wireless. Though many libraries had to remove or inactivate some public computers in order to maintain appropriate distancing for users of the remaining terminals, libraries still provided thousands of computers for patron use, and many libraries strengthened their Wi-Fi signals to provide access from outside the building. Using Federal grant funds this fiscal year, some libraries installed solar charging stations and outdoor work tables to accommodate internet users who preferred to be outside. As more libraries have

transitioned to receiving their internet service over fiber, rather than over cable or DSL, they have the signal capacity to boost Wi-Fi more broadly for patron use.

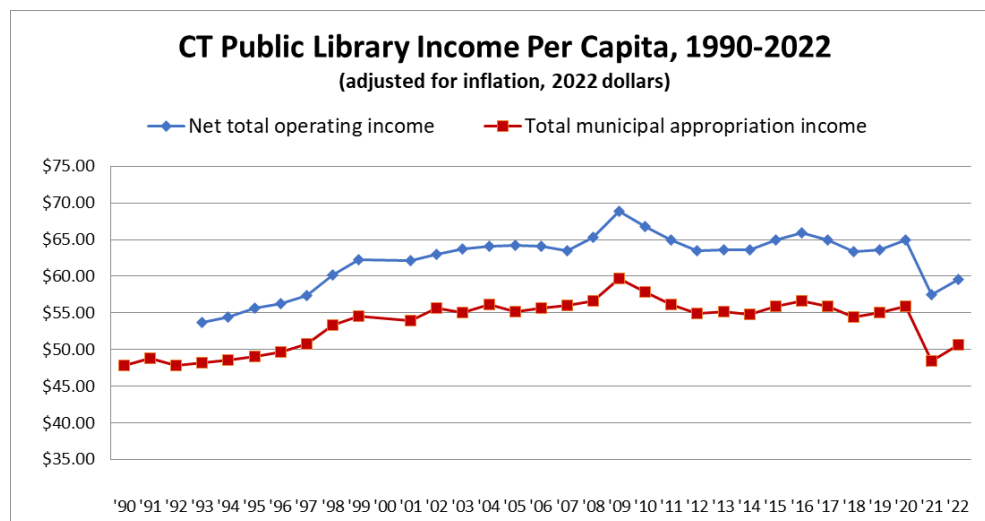
In additional efforts to address digital inequities exposed by the pandemic, 41 libraries reported lending computers for home use, and 68 libraries reported lending hotspots. These were new questions in the Annual Report last year, and both measures have increased from the previous year's numbers.

### 3. Library Staff



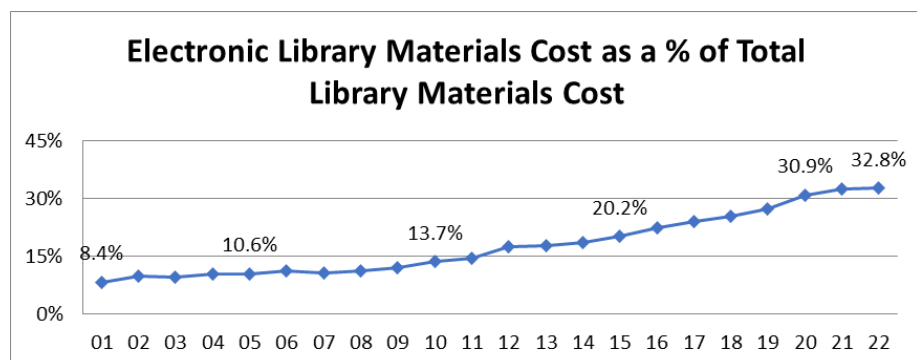
During the pandemic, the number of full-time equivalent library staff fell back to a level not seen since the late 1990s, but staffing numbers recovered once libraries reopened their buildings. Still, the trend in staffing has been declining, causing library personnel to become more versatile. There are currently 237 fewer FTE employees statewide than there were 20 years ago.

### 4. Library Budgets



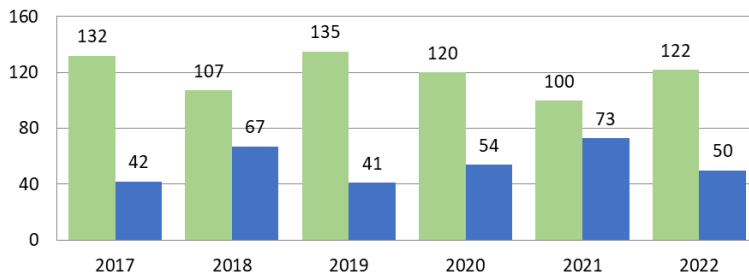
Libraries do more with fewer employees partly because they just don't have the budgets to support more staff. Operating income (when adjusted for inflation), including the portion of this income coming from municipal government, is the same as it was in the late 1990s.

A steadily increasing portion of the limited library materials budget is devoted to electronic materials like e-books, downloadable audio and video, and database subscriptions. In FY2020 and FY2021, many libraries shifted money into this budget category to bulk up online collections as hours of operation decreased and physical materials became harder to lend. 84% of libraries indicated that they added e-materials due to the pandemic.



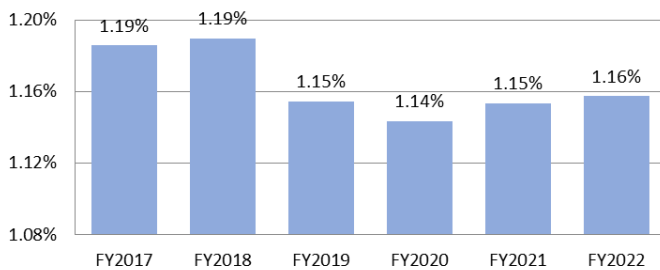
### Local Municipal Funding for CT Public Libraries (local library appropriation per capita)

■ Libraries Receiving More Funding Than Year Before  
■ Libraries Receiving LESS Funding Than Year Before

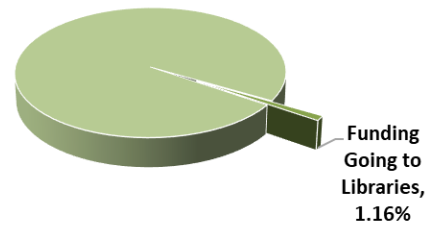


Two thirds of individual libraries saw their municipal appropriations increase this year. And while the percentage of overall town/city revenues that ended up as library expenditures increased slightly again in FY2022, overall there is a decline in per capita funding when adjusted for inflation. The dollar didn't go as far in FY2022 as it used to.

### % of Total Municipal Revenue That Goes to CT Public Libraries



### How Much Municipal Revenue Goes to CT Public Libraries



## 5. Highs and Lows for FY2022

### Highs

1. Almost all use measures – library visits, reference transactions, circulation, use of public computers – increased in comparison to last year, as most libraries resumed 12 full months of in-building operations after the coronavirus closures of the previous two years.
2. In person programs are coming back strong, with 52,196 programs for 877,158 attendees.
3. Libraries continued to offer online programs, though in smaller numbers than the previous year. There were a total of 18,252 live virtual and prerecorded programs for 216,640 attendees and 269,029 views.
4. 84% of libraries still offered outside or curbside service to their patrons, with more than 119,000 appointments filled. This service greatly benefits people with reduced mobility, caregivers, and busy patrons. Many libraries installed outdoor lockers for 24/7 pickup, a huge boon to accessibility.
5. 41 libraries are open on Sundays most of the year, providing seven-day access for busy workers, families, and students.
6. Thanks largely to the Fiber to the Library Grant Program, the number of libraries with a fiber connection to the internet increased for the seventh year in a row to an all-time high at 147.
7. 89% of libraries reported that they provided Wi-Fi access outside the library, leveraging their strong internet signals.

8. The average child or young adult in Connecticut borrowed 11 items from libraries during FY2022 (based on a juvenile and YA materials circulation per capita using the Connecticut population of under 18s only). This is a notable change from 7.5 items in the previous year.
9. 48 libraries have Spanish language collections, and 15 libraries have Chinese language collections.
10. Libraries cumulatively received over \$3.5 million in Federal funds, representing another infusion of PPP, CARES, and ARPA money for Connecticut public libraries.
11. 69% of public libraries saw an increase in their municipal appropriation last year.

## Lows

1. While most library use measures rebounded to some degree in FY2022, they are not yet at the pre-pandemic levels seen in FY2019. The overall dampening effect of COVID-19 on library services lingers in the number of library visits, hours open per week, reference transactions, total circulation, number of programs, program attendance, and use of public computers.
2. In FY2022, the total number of hours libraries were open statewide was 492,620 hours, versus 533,157 hours three years ago, pre-pandemic. This loss of hours reduces the availability of library services for all residents.
3. Ten libraries were closed to the public for some period of time in FY2022 due to COVID-19.
4. Distressingly, the percent of Connecticut residents with library cards continues to shrink, with a loss of more than 5% of population over the past five years and a long decline from 58.6% in 2008 to 35.4% in 2022. In comparison, the Institute of Museum and Library Services documented in their [FY2019 Public Libraries Survey](#) that 55% of US residents nationwide had a library card.
5. 14% of libraries reported lower total circulation this year than last year.
6. E-media (e-books and downloadable audio and video) circulation decreased compared to the previous year, getting closer to FY2020 use.
7. The borrowIT CT program, which allows state residents to use their home library card at any other public library in state, remains underutilized, at only 43% of the circulation seen by this program in FY2010.
8. Nearly all libraries have wireless internet available to users, but only 39.5% can report the number of wireless sessions on their public networks. This critical measure of library use should be counted whenever possible.
9. The number of physical items statewide decreased by almost 1.7 million over the past five years as libraries continue to shift their focus to providing more public gathering spaces. Libraries used those newly freed spaces to provide more physically distanced seating and workstations for patrons.

The statistics in this report are based on the annual “[Connecticut Public Libraries: a Statistical Profile](#)” which compiles statistics from the [Annual Report](#) that public libraries complete each fall.

To compare your library against the statewide numbers or with other libraries, use the [Chart & Report Creators](#) available in Excel and Tableau.

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