

PRESS RELEASE

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LISU Annual Library Statistics 2006

LISU has just published the last in its long-running statistical series supported by the Museums Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) and its predecessors, summarising activity in a broad range of library sectors, the *Annual Library Statistics 2006*. The aim of this series, which has run for 21 years, is to give as comprehensive a picture as possible of library activity in the UK, drawing on a wide range of data sources, and showing trends for up to ten years in sector-wide totals and key performance ratios for public, academic and the national libraries. "LISU's objective analysis and statistical series is of significant value to policy makers. It is a valuable piece of work and the MLA is looking forward to developing a new version, building on the past work of LISU," said Chris Batt, MLA Chief Executive.

Key findings from this year's analysis include:

- Public library expenditure has increased for the seventh consecutive year, to £18.32 per head of population in 2004-05. Although the greatest part of this is on library staff, over £95m was spent on books with a further £29m on audio-visual and electronic materials. Increasing staff costs reflect in part an increase in opening hours, driven up in England and Wales by the public library service standards.
- The number of visits to public libraries continues to increase, although fewer books are being borrowed overall. An estimated 48% of the adult population visit the library each year, drawn in part by the IT facilities available in 97% of branches. The proportion of children's books in stock has been increasing, and issues of children's material have increased for the first time since 1996-97.
- In the higher education sector, library resources are generally increasing in line with student numbers, if not also in line with inflation. Overall library spending rose to £520m in 2004-05, equivalent to £310 per FTE student. In common with public libraries, the greatest part of this expenditure is on staff, with around one-third on information resources of all kinds.
- Academic library use, in terms of items issued, is increasing faster than the increases in student numbers, although the increased investment in electronic resources and their availability outside the library buildings is thought to have contributed to a fall in physical visits. Academic libraries are leading the way in the development of reliable measures of use, and hence value, for the range of electronic resources now available to them.
- Although a wide variety of statistics is available for the three national libraries (the British Library, National Library of Wales and National Library of Scotland), these are derived from individual annual reports, and it is not generally possible to aggregate them. Patterns of use are not the same in all three, with the number of user visits falling at the British Library and National Library of Wales, but increasing at the National Library of Scotland in 2004-05. The number of items consulted also fell at the British Library, and at the National Library of Scotland, but increased at the National Library of Wales.

- There are almost ten thousand Chartered Librarians working in all sectors of the information economy in the UK, although this is 17% fewer than five years ago.

The latest volume also presents some data on Government Department libraries, and a variety of statistics of general interest to the information profession and others, including price indexes for library materials, data on the market for books and a summary of the most recent data from the Registrar of Public Lending Right.

The series has been described by reviewers as “an incredibly helpful and informative compendium of statistical information” (*Performance Measurement & Metrics*) and “one of the best statistical yearbooks of library statistics on the market” (*New Library World*). Dr J Eric Davies, Director of LISU, said “this is a valuable summary of the state of the wider library domain in the UK, showing not only the current position but also how that position has developed over the last ten years. If alternative support cannot be found in the next few months then, regrettably, the current volume will be the last.”

LISU Annual Library Statistics 2006 is available to download free of charge from the LISU website www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/lisu/pages/publications/als06.html. Print copies are also available at £37.50 (ISBN 13: 978-1-905499-09-0; ISBN 10: 1-905499-09-4; A4) from LISU, Loughborough University, Leics LE11 3TU.

Tel: 01509 635680, Fax: 01509 635699, Email: lisu@lboro.ac.uk and through TeleOrdering.

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Note to Editors

For further information contact

Claire Creaser, Deputy Director and Senior Statistician, LISU, Holywell Park, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leics LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 635682, email: c.creaser@lboro.ac.uk

About LISU

LISU is a national research and information centre based in the Research School of Informatics and the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University. LISU comprises a team of experienced Information Managers, Statisticians, Researchers and Administrators focusing on the analysis, development, interpretation and dissemination of statistics, performance assessment measures and related management data as well as advising on their application and exploitation in the real situation. It has an established reputation as an independent authority in its field fulfilling a key role in supporting managers of information and library services amongst others.