

# Public Libraries and the Internet 2004: Overview



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# Key Findings

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- 99.6% of all public library outlets are connected to the Internet.
- 98.9% of libraries connected to the Internet provide public access Internet services.
- 13.3% of libraries reported a decrease in their budgets for technology in the previous year, whereas 50.6% indicated that their technology budget stayed the same from the previous year.



# Key Findings (continued)

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- The vast majority of public libraries provide some type of information technology training to patrons.
- Nearly 70% of libraries have no set upgrade schedule for hardware
  - 77.4% have no set upgrade schedule for **software**
  - 96.4% have no set upgrade schedule for **connection speed**.
- 40% of public libraries currently filter patron access to the Internet.



# Background

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- The 2004 survey continues the research of the previous surveys, and expands the scope of the areas studied
  - Previous studies available at <http://www.ii.fsu.edu/plinternet>
- These data can provide national and state policy makers, library advocates, researchers, government and private funding organizations, and a range of other stakeholders with a better understanding of the issues and needs of libraries associated with providing Internet-based services and resources.



# Study Objectives

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- Determine the extent to which:
  - Library provision of public access Internet services and resources meet and are able to sustain community public access needs;
  - Public librarians and library staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to develop, maintain, and sustain public library Internet access programs, services, and resources that meet the needs of the communities that the librarians/staff serve;
  - Public libraries can serve as a public Internet access venue of first choice within the libraries' communities;



# Study Objectives (Continued)

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- Determine the:
  - Impacts of government and private funding programs in public libraries;
  - Costs associated with Internet connectivity and the provision of networked services; and
  - Extent to which public libraries serve as key technology and Internet-based resource/service training centers for the communities that the libraries serve.



# Methodology

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- Web-based survey approach, with a mailed survey participation invitation letter sent to the directors of libraries in the sample.
- Estimates based on public library:
  - Metropolitan status (e.g., urban, suburban, and rural);
  - Poverty (less than 20%[low], 20%-40%[medium], and greater than 40%[high]);
  - State (the 50 states plus the District of Columbia); and
  - National.



# Sampling of Data

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- Sample frame/approach:
  - Most recent public library dataset available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as a sample frame.
  - The study team employed the services of the GeoLib database (<http://www.geolib.org/PLGDB.cfm>) to geocode the NCES public library universe file in order to calculate the poverty rates for public library outlets.

## Sample:

- Sample with replacement of 6,865 outlets.
  - Complex sample required to make projections based on metropolitan status, poverty, and states.





# Response Rate

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- Survey asked respondents to answer questions about both outlets and systems
  - 5,023 outlet (branch level) responses, for an overall response rate was 73.2%.
  - 3,084 systems, for a response rate of 68.0%.



# Connectivity Table

## Public Library Outlets Connected to the Internet by Metropolitan Status and Poverty

	Poverty			
	Low	Medium	High	Overall
Metropolitan Status				
Urban	100.0% (n=1,634)	99.3% (n=1,077)	100.0% (n=150)	99.7% (n=2,861)
Suburban	99.9% (n=4,919)	97.8% (n=334)	100.0% (n=7)	99.7% (n=5,260)
Rural	99.5% (n=6,982)	99.7% (n=1,003)	100.0% (n=24)	99.5% (n=8,009)
Overall	99.7% (n=13,534)	99.2% (n=2,415)	100.0% (n=181)	<b>99.6%</b> <b>(n=16,130)</b>



# Public Access Table

## Connected Public Library Outlets that Provide Public Access to the Internet by Metropolitan Status and Poverty

	Poverty			
	Low	Medium	High	Overall
Metropolitan Status				
Urban	100.0% (n=1,614)	100.0% (n=905)	100.0% (n=223)	98.5% (n=2,826)
Suburban	94.6% (n=4,194)	100.0% (n=316)	100.0% (n=16)	99.4% (n=5,243)
Rural	91.1% (n=6,198)	93.6% (n=1,508)	100.0% (n=86)	98.7% (n=7,948)
Overall	99.0% (n=13,442)	96.3% (n=2,397)	98.1% (n=181)	<b>98.9%</b> <b>(n=16,017)</b>



# E-rate Discounts Table

**Public Library System Mean E-rate Discount Percentages by Category and by Metropolitan Status and Poverty**

	Metropolitan Status			Poverty Level			Overall
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Low	Medium	High	
<b>E-rate Discount Categories</b>	n=605	n=2,708	n=5,468	n=7,855	n=869	n=57	N=8,781
<b>Internet connectivity</b>	20.5%	9.0%	17.9%	13.8%	27.2%	46.6%	15.3%
<b>Telecommunications services</b>	31.8%	12.8%	25.9%	20.3%	37.6%	61.3%	22.2%
<b>Internal connections costs</b>	8.2%	1.7%	4.8%	3.2%	11.0%	22.4%	4.1%



# Average Workstations by State

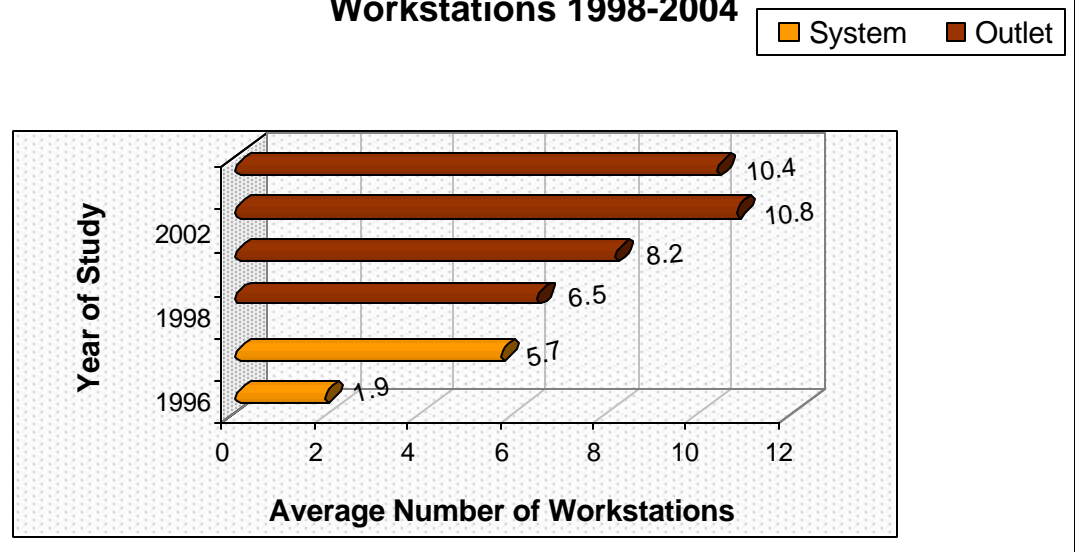
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- States with the highest *estimated* average number of public access workstations per library:
  - Florida (22.6)
  - Kentucky (18.8)
  - New Jersey (15.5)
  - Georgia (14.0)
  - Utah (13.0)
  - Rhode Island (12.6)
  - Indiana (12.3)

# Selected Issues

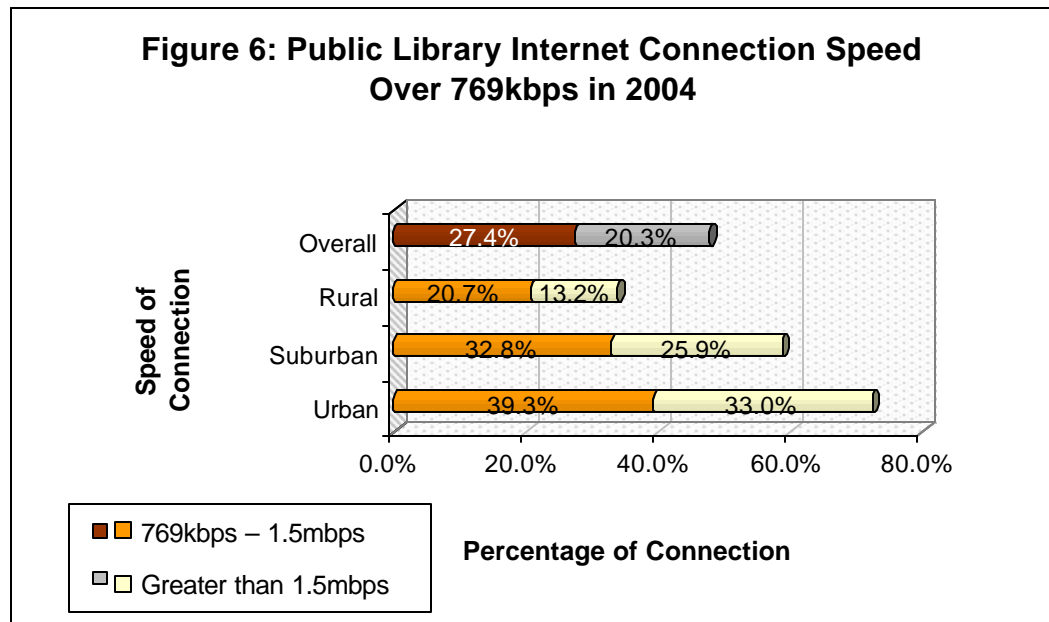
- Key issues identified from this research project show that public libraries are:
  - Continuing to increase Internet availability.
  - Reaching a plateau in terms of the number of public access workstations available to meet demand.

**Figure 3: Average Number of Public Access Workstations 1998-2004**



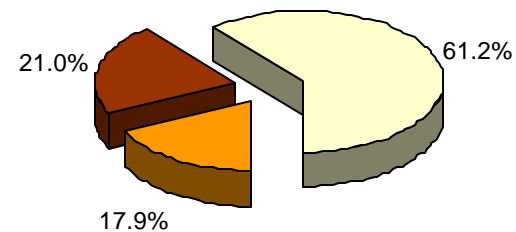
# Selected Issues (cont'd)

- Continuing to increase their bandwidth, but high-speed connectivity is not evenly distributed across libraries.
- Continuing to filter their public access workstations.



- Exploring wireless connectivity;
- Lacking upgrade schedules for technology.

**Figure 7: Public Access Wireless Internet Connectivity Availability in 2004**



■ Currently Available  
■ No Plans to Make It Available  
■ Plans to Make It Available





# A Ten-Year Perspective

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- Public libraries continue to struggle for adequate information technology resource support.
- Importance of public libraries as a “safety net” for access to the Internet.
- Current policies related to national security have created a more complicated policy environment than 10 years ago.
- Still in search of a national policy on the role of public libraries in American society and access to information.



# Need for a National Summit on Public Library Policy

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- What are the roles and responsibilities of public libraries in the Internet/Networked environment?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the Federal government regarding public libraries?
- What public laws and policies are needed to enhance the vitality and impact of public libraries?
- To what degree can public libraries contribute to national security issues and still protect the privacy of individuals?
- What is the best venue to discuss and resolve these and related issues?



# Planning for the 2006 Study

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- The 2006 national survey will be developed beginning this summer.
- The survey will be administered in the Spring 2006 with results available in Summer 2006.
- Specific topics and survey questions are being developed now.
- Your suggestions for survey content and questions are welcome!



# More Information

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## Public Libraries and the Internet 2004: Survey Results and Findings

by John Carlo Bertot, Charles R. McClure, and  
Paul T. Jaeger, 2005.

- II website link: <http://www.ii.fsu.edu>
- PLInternet link: <http://www.ii.fsu/plinternet>



# Comments and Questions?

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