

Return on Investment from Ohio Public Libraries and Comparison with Other States

Prepared for the Ohio Library Council

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Summary of Findings

This report compared the service provision and cost effectiveness of Ohio's public libraries to those in other states and also computed the Return on Investment to Ohioans from utilizing the materials and services of the state's extensive public library system. The findings detailed in this report provide a comprehensive and convincing assessment of the value of Ohio public libraries to the state's residents.

The findings below highlight the quality of Ohio's public libraries in a national context:

- Ohio has the highest percentage of registered borrowers at 73.7%. This percentage is nearly 40% greater than the national average.
- Ohio's library use (circulation, reference services, programming, and computer access) is second only to California, and Ohio has the highest number of library transactions per capita in the country, utilizing library materials and services at a rate that is more than twice the national average.
- Ohio also ranks first nationally in library visits per capita, averaging nearly 6 visits per year for each person. This rate is more than 50% greater than the national average.
- While Ohio public libraries provide an extensive array of services to patrons, they also do so in a cost-effective manner. Ohio has one of the lowest costs per library transaction, ranking 37th nationally and 20% below the national average cost.

Public library "Return on Investment" (ROI) is computed by assessing the statewide value of library materials and services to library patrons and then comparing this value with statewide library operating expenditures. The ROI analysis in this report has these principal findings:

- Ohio's public libraries provided \$3.07 billion in direct economic value (or "benefit") to Ohio residents in 2019.
- When the economic benefit above is compared with statewide total operating expenditures of \$780 million, the Return on Investment from Ohio's public libraries in 2019 was 3.94. This means that for every \$1 spent by public libraries in Ohio, \$3.94 in benefit was delivered to Ohio residents.
- When economic multiplier effects are included, each \$1 spent by Ohio public libraries returns a total economic value of \$4.98.