INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

InterConnections: The IMLS National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums and the Internet

Conclusions

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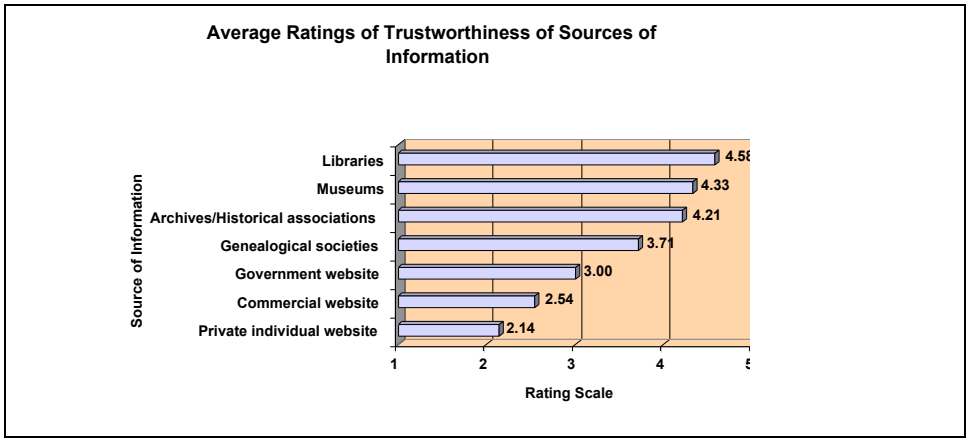
CONCLUSION 1. Libraries and museums evoke consistent, extraordinary public trust among diverse adult users.

Trust is an important factor in deciding which information sources to use. People have different perspectives on the trustworthiness of the information available and obtained through different sources. The survey asked adults to rate the trustworthiness on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 – "not at all trustworthy" to 5 – "extremely trustworthy." Libraries and museums rated higher than other sources. Information obtained during in-person visits to museums and libraries was consistently more trusted than information obtained online from museums and libraries. Information found from other sources on the Internet was rated lower than information obtained online from museums and libraries.

Libraries and museums are the most trusted sources of information according to a survey of over 1,700 adults.

Male and female adults of all ages, levels of education and race/ethnicity rate trustworthiness of libraries and museums higher than other sources of information.

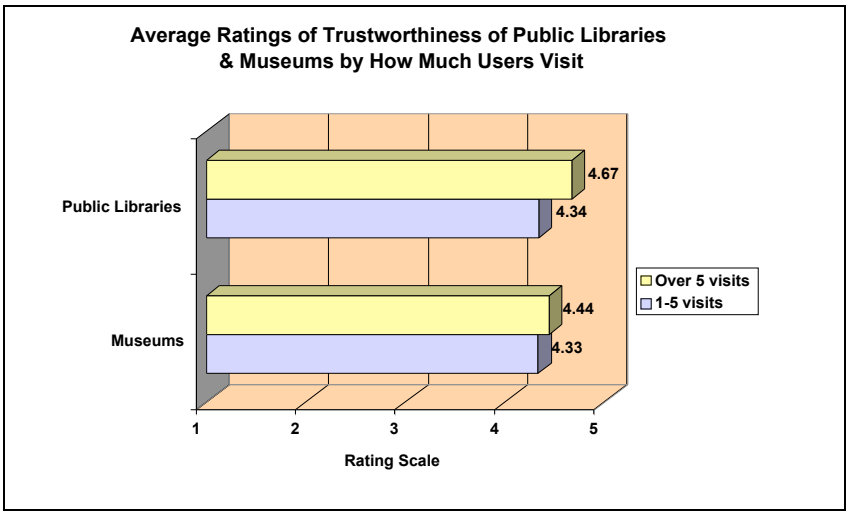
Libraries and museums are trusted far more than other sources of information including government, commercial and private individual websites (4.58 and 4.33 compared with 3.00, 2.54 and 2.14 for the websites).



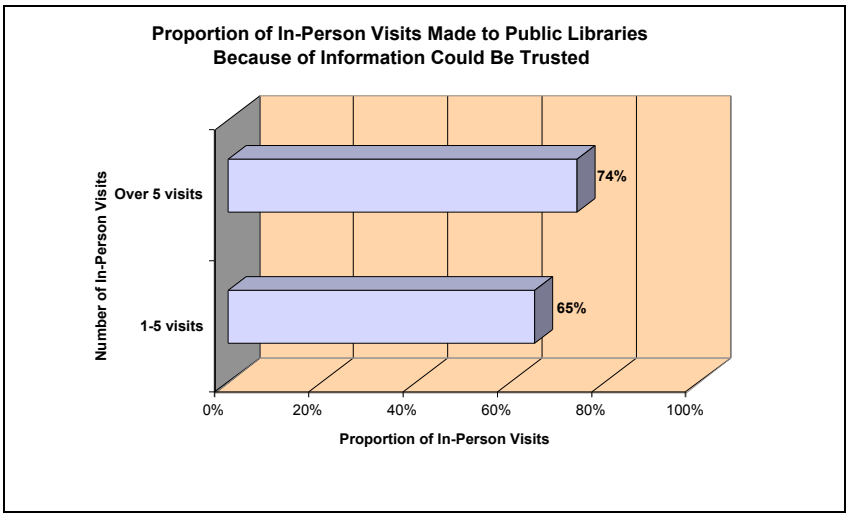
Among other sources, public trust in cultural institutions is very strong: 86% of public library visitors and 77% of museum visitors rated them equal or higher in trustworthiness than all other sources of information.

Number of visits to museums and public libraries and public trust are positively correlated. Users have gained trust through greater use and/or they use museums and public libraries more because of this trust.

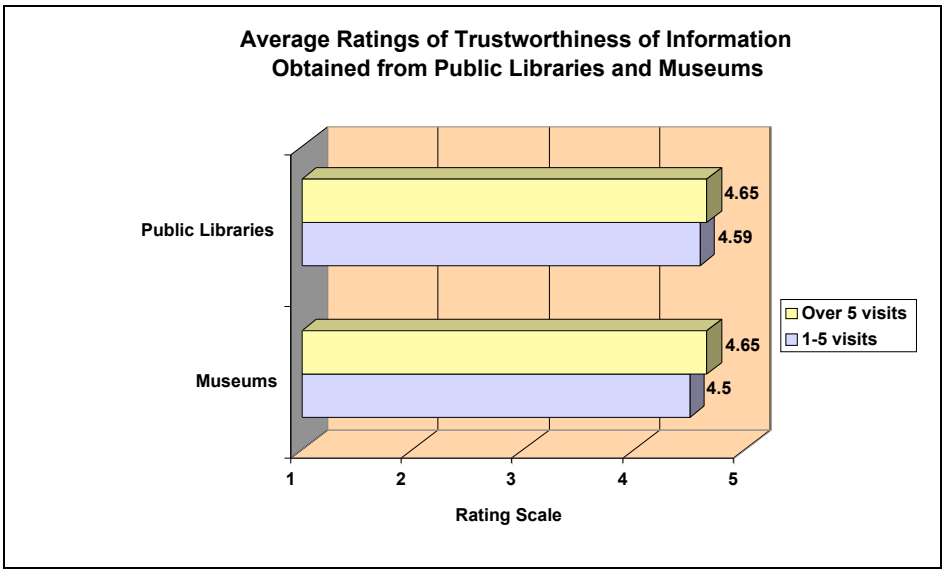
Question: "How trustworthy do you consider a museum/library as a source of information? (Rating: 1-not at all trustworthy to 5- extremely trustworthy)



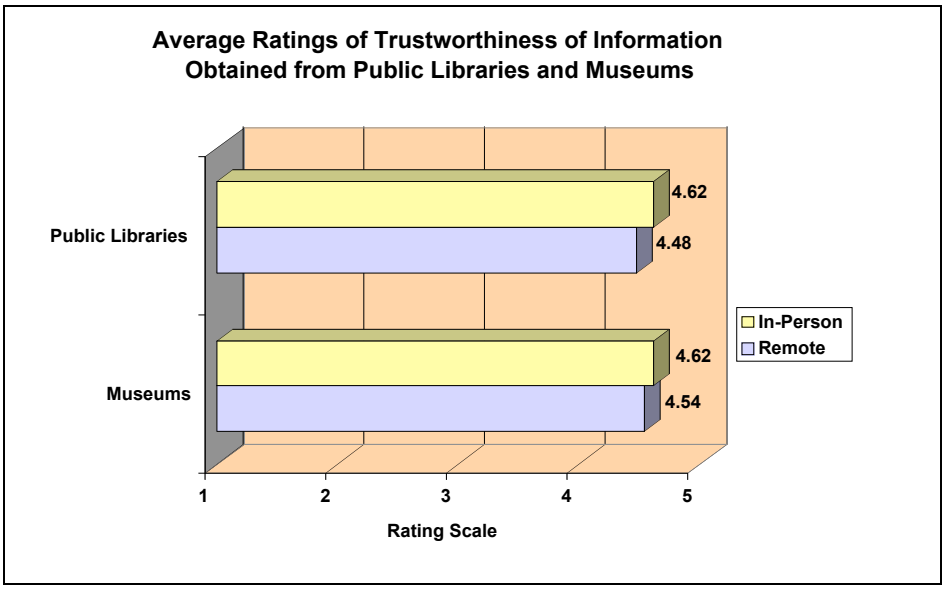
Question: "Why did you choose to use a public library to obtain needed information? Was it because the information could be trusted?"



Questions: "How would you rate the trustworthiness of the information that you obtained from the public library?" or "How would you rate the trustworthiness of exhibits, etc. or information about them?"

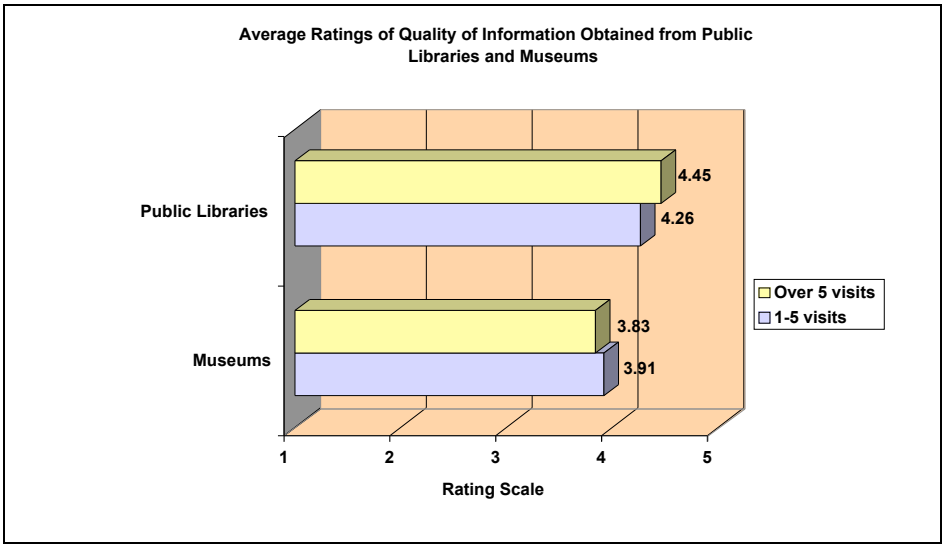


People who visit public libraries and museums in-person value the information they find with greater trust than those who visit remotely (4.62 versus 4.48-4.54).



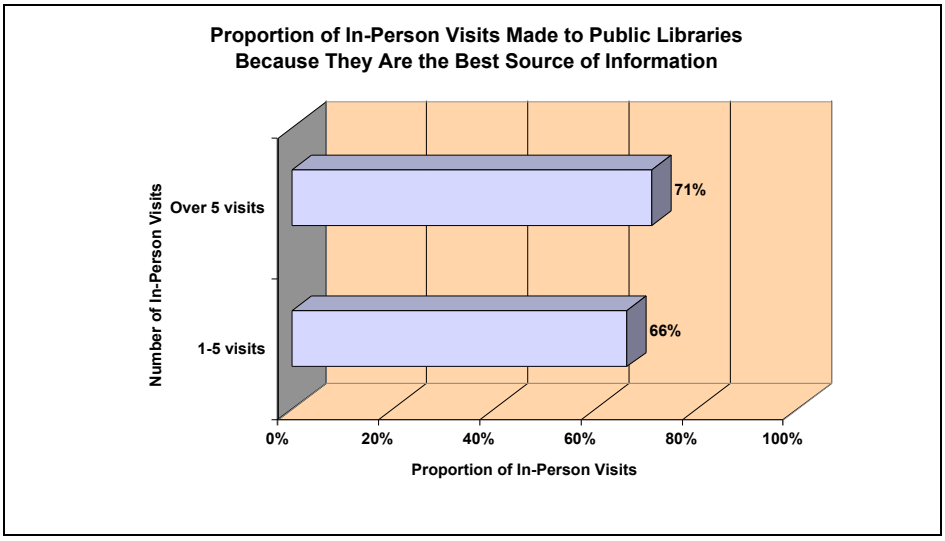
The perceived quality of information provided by public libraries invites increased use. The numbers of visits to museums and public libraries are positively correlated to ratings of quality.

Questions: "How would you rate the quality of information obtained by the public library?" or "How would you rate the quality of descriptive information about exhibits, etc?"

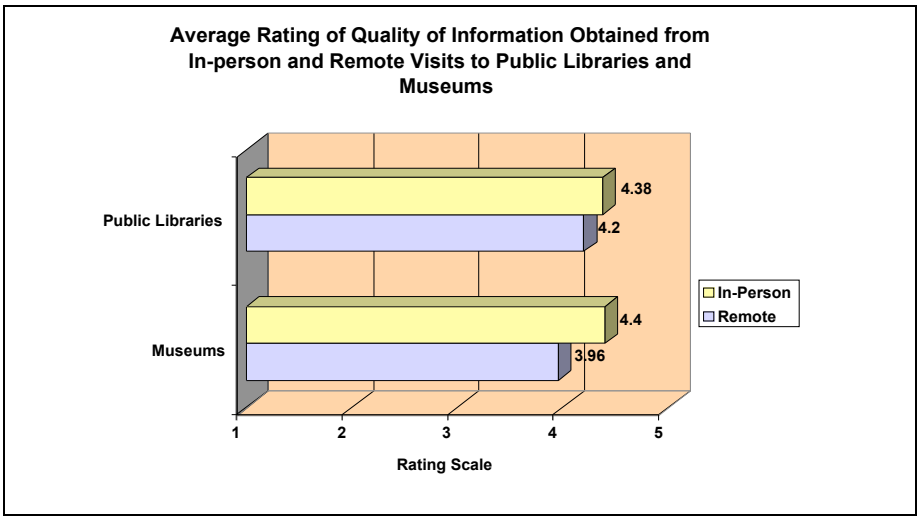


Frequent in-person public library visitors are more likely to choose a public library because it is the best source of information.

Question: "Why did you choose to use the public library to obtain needed information? Was it because it was the best source of information?"



People who visit public libraries and museums in-person value the quality of information they find more highly than those who visit remotely. This reflects that Internet use is nearly always rated lower than in-person use.

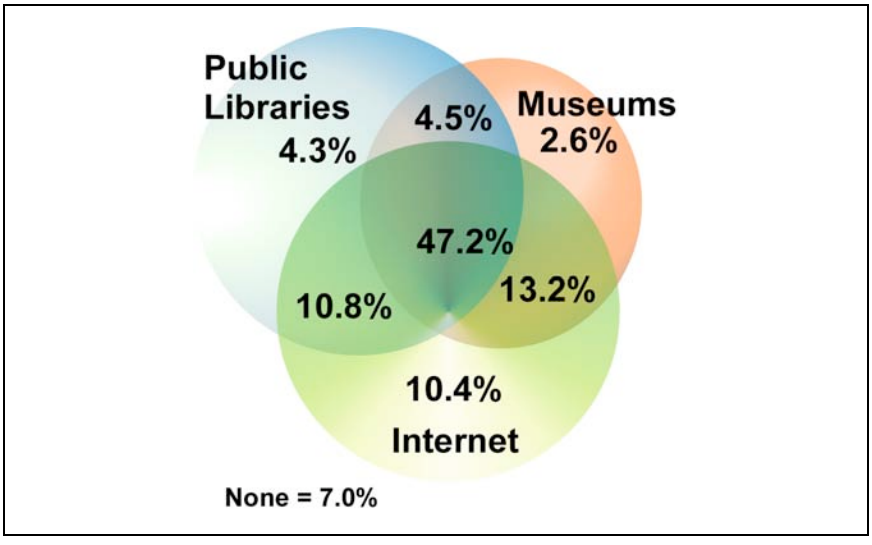


CONCLUSION 2. An explosion of available information inspires the search for more information.

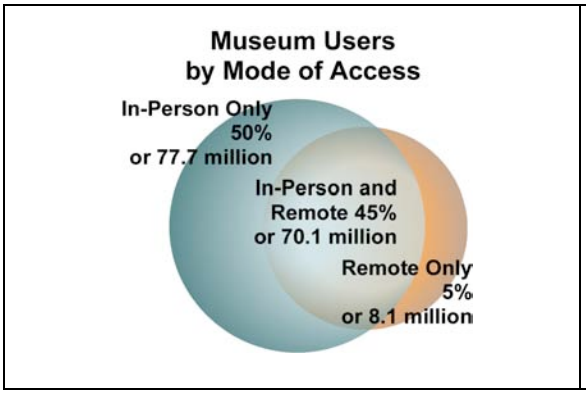
Over recent decades, Americans have been exposed to an explosion of information, and the number of sources from which information can be obtained has increased dramatically. People use multiple information sources to meet their information needs. Since the use of one source leads to others, museums, public libraries and the Internet do not compete, but rather complement each other in this information-rich environment.

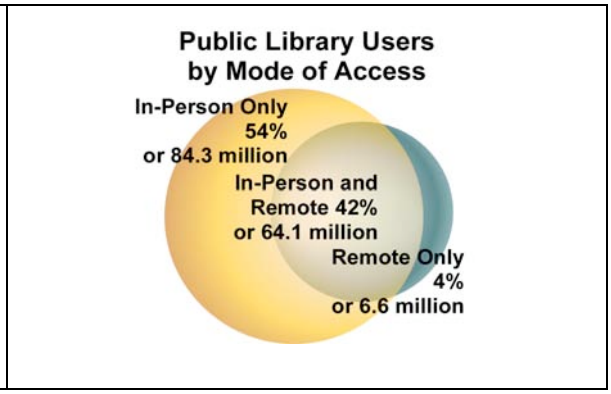
When adults seek information to make decisions or solve problems they use such sources as persons, books, newspapers, magazines, the Internet or television. When information is needed, they average using 2.4 sources per occasion. The most frequently used source is the Internet (33%) followed by other persons (29%), books (14%), newspapers and magazines (10%) and other sources (14%).

To fulfill their need for information, most adults use museums, public libraries, and the Internet. Museums and public libraries are used by 70%, the Internet is used by 83%), and nearly half (47%) use all three. Only 7% of adults do not use any of the three sources.

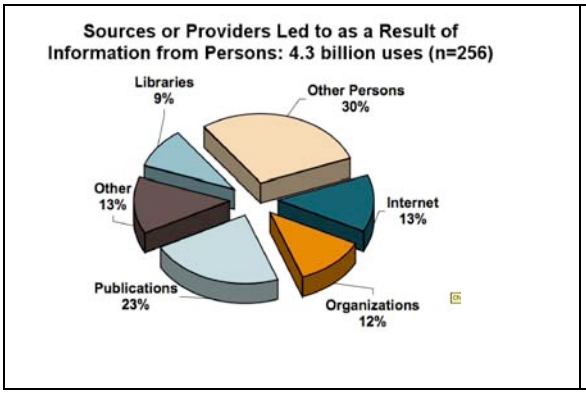


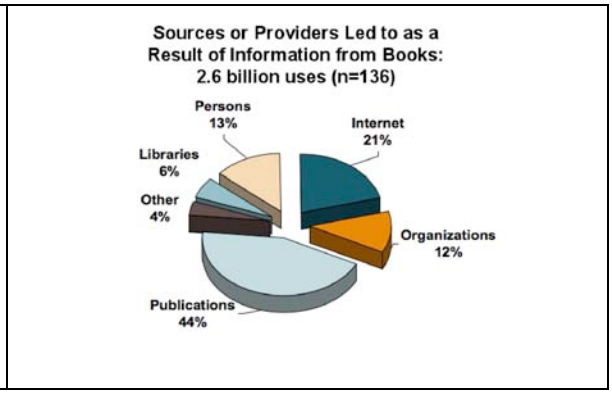
The vast majority of visitors to museums (95%) and public libraries (96%) continue to visit in-person; this is an indication that the Internet is not replacing in-person visits.

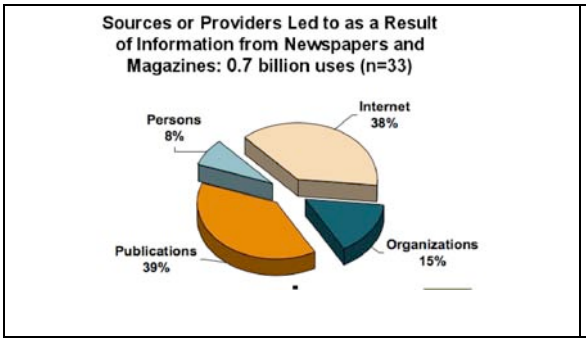


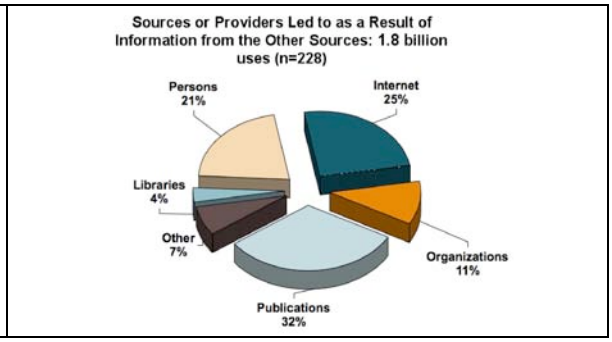


When people are seeking information, they make choices as to which sources of information to use. In the process of using those sources, they are often led to additional ones.

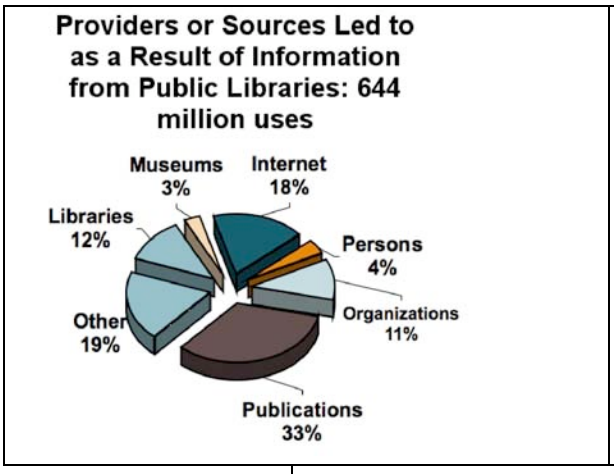


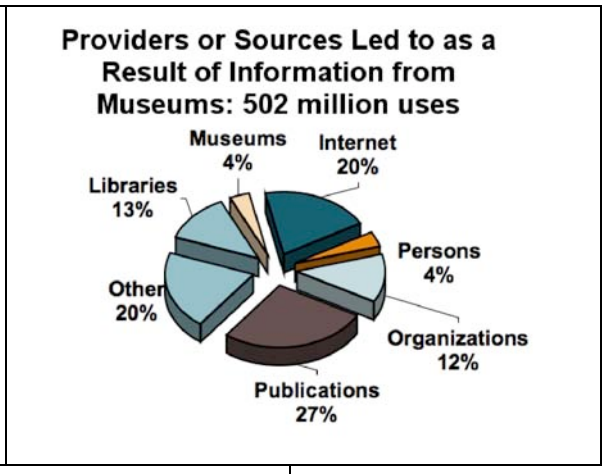


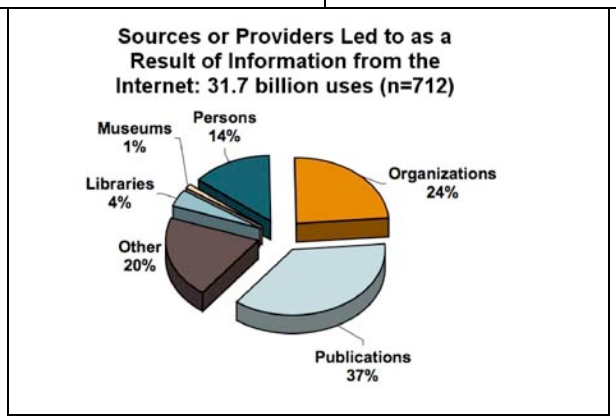




Museums, public libraries and the Internet lead users to different sources of information millions of times. Museum visits led to 65 million library visits and public library visits led to 20 million museum visits in the past 12 months.

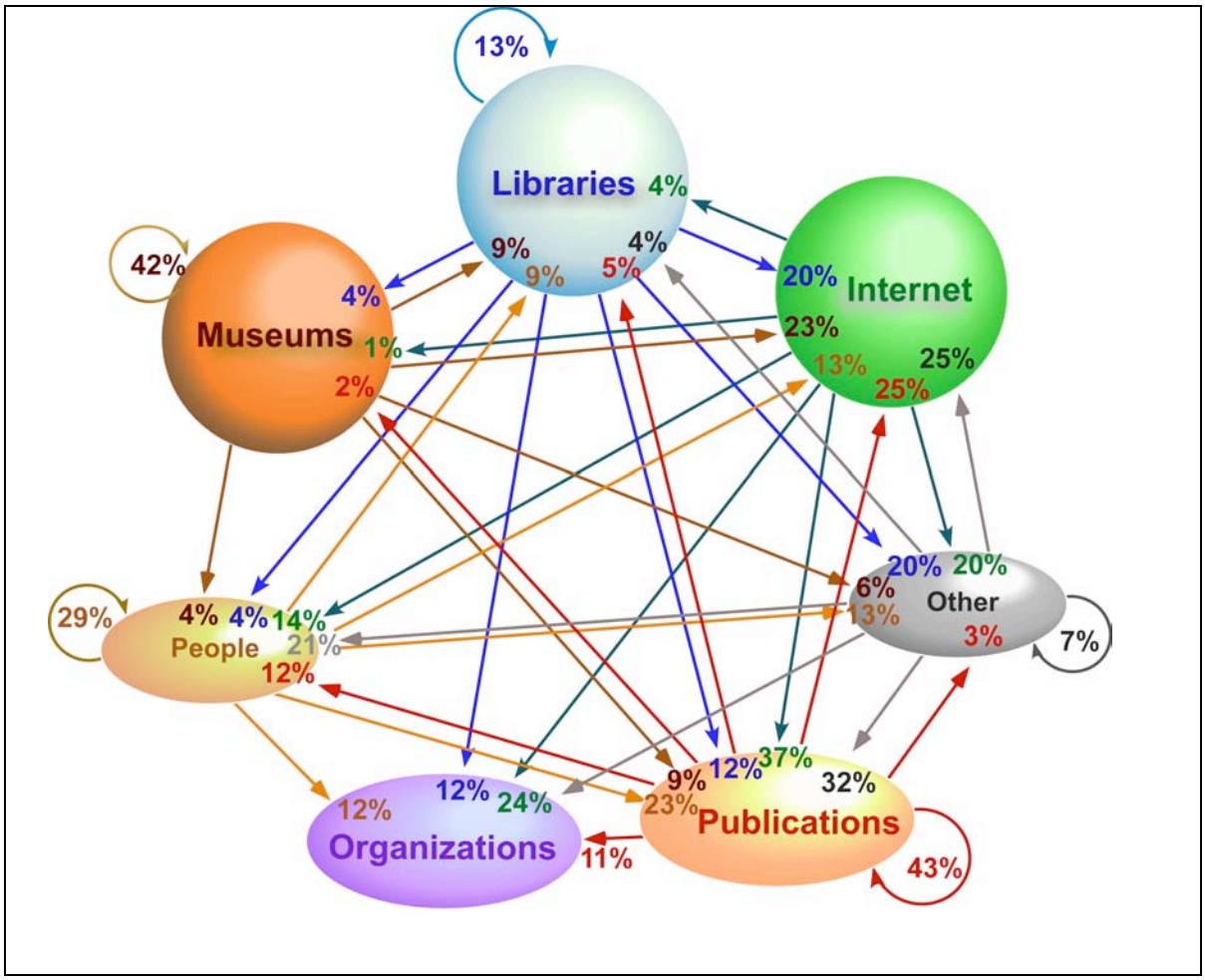






Users' choices of information sources and modes of access are driven by different information needs, trustworthiness, quality, convenience, importance, and cost. The use of any one source often leads to others. The Internet seems to function not only as a source of information but also as a stimulus to identify additional resources.

Examples include that 9% of museum uses lead to publications and 2% of publication uses lead to museums; 23% of museum uses lead to the Internet and 1% of Internet uses leads to museums; 9% of museum uses lead to libraries and 4% of library uses lead to museums; and 42% of museum uses lead to planning for future museum uses.



CONCLUSION 3. The public benefits significantly from the presence of museums and libraries on the Internet.

In an increasingly technologically driven information environment, questions have arisen over the future of museums and libraries. This study presents compelling evidence that museums and libraries have leveraged the availability of the Internet to present their resources and services to a broader audience and offered an additional mode of access to them, while traditional in-person visits continue to increase.

In 2006 remote online access increased adult visits to museums by 75% and to public libraries by 73% (while in-person visits have increased over time).

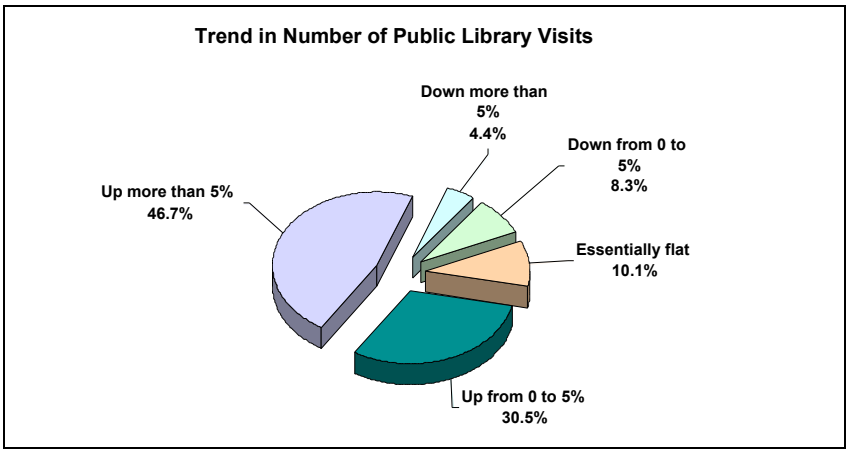
	Museums	Public Libraries
Number of in-person visits	701 million	762 million
Number of remote online visits	524 million	558 million
Total visits	1,225 million	1,320 million

Public library in-person visits per capita have increased 26% over the past 13 years.

The National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) has observed visits to public libraries from 1992 to 2005 where visits are defined as: “The total number of persons entering the library for whatever purpose during the year”.

- 1992 3.8 visits per capita
- 2005 4.8 visits per capita

A 2007/2008 IMLS survey (The Future of Librarians in the Workforce) with 2,266 public libraries responding thus far shows a positive trend in visits to public libraries. Question is: "What is the general trend in the number of physical, in-person visits to your library, compared to five years ago?"



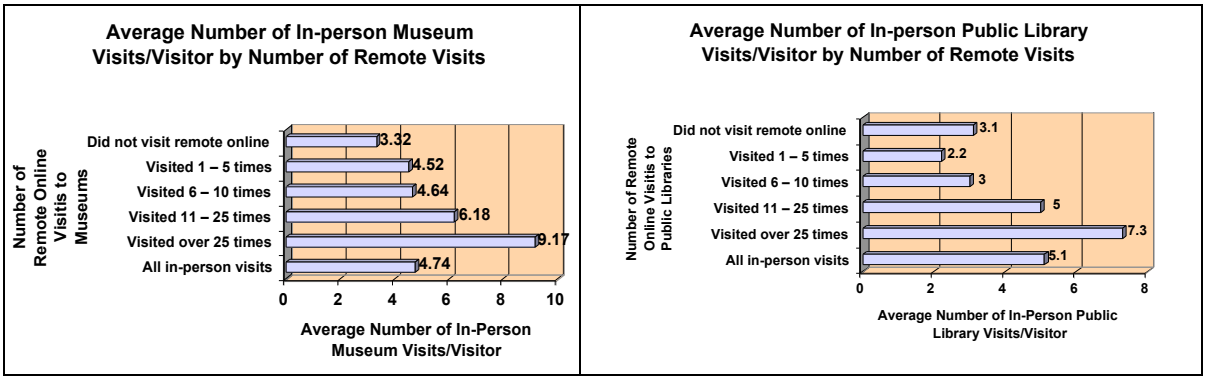
Museum in-person visitors were asked whether they have visited more often, less often or about the same as in the past 12 months as done previously. 26% of museum visitors said more often, 23% less often and 51% about the same. This suggests a modest increase in such visits.

90 % of remote online visitors to museums and 91% of remote online visitors to public libraries are also in-person visitors.

Type of Visitor	Proportion of ***Museum*** Visitors	Proportion of ***Public Library*** Visitors
In-person and remote online	45%	42%
In-person only	50%	54%
Remote online only	5%	4%
All visitors	100.0%	100.0%

Remote visitors are also in-person visitors. Even though 53% of in-person visitors do not visit museums remotely, only 10% of remote online visitors do not visit in-person. And 56% of public library in-person visitors do not visit remotely, but only 9% of remote visitors do not visit in-person.

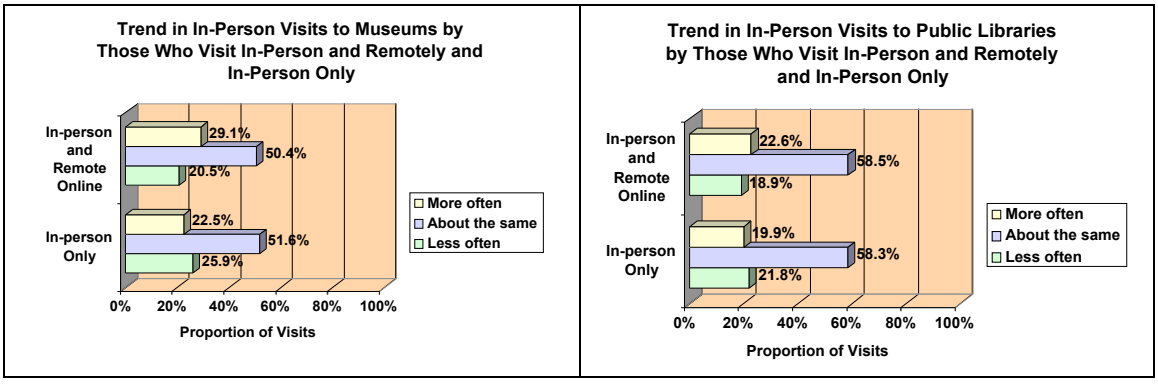
The number of remote online visits is positively correlated with the number of in-person visits to museums and public libraries.



Visitors were asked whether in the past 12 months they visited more often, less often or about the same as previously. In-person visitors to museums and public libraries who also visit remotely have a more positive trend in visiting more often than those who visit in-person only.

More museum in-person visitors who also visit remotely report that they visit more often (29%) than less often (21%), but the opposite is true for those who visit in-person only (26% less often versus 23% more often). The same is true with public library in-person visitors, but less so for in-person and remote online visitors (23% more often versus 19% less often) and in-person only visitors (22% less often versus 20% more often).

Question: "In the past 12 months have you visited museums/public libraries more often, less often or about the same as previously?"



Remote online visits to public libraries appear to stimulate more use of museums and public libraries.

Question: "Did information provided by remote access to the library lead you to any other use sources of information?"

Type of Source Led To	Number of Remote Online Visits to Public libraries
Public library services	15 million
Publications	
Articles	59 million
Books	65 million
Other	13 million
Museums	20 million

Some, but not a known number, of the articles and books come from the public libraries.

Internet accessible workstations in public libraries, in particular, have introduced online access to electronic sources provided by the libraries and to additional Internet sources of information. Many workstation users do so because they need information from multiple library sources. Nowhere else is such capability available from a single provider.

In-person visitors to public libraries use in-library workstations for online access for several reasons:

- about 25% do not have access to the Internet in their home;
- when seeking information to address important situations for which a decision or solution is needed, users report requiring an average of 2.1 sources;
- in-library online users often use additional sources in the library:
  - 55% of the time they use books
  - 15% of the time they use articles or magazines, and
  - they often use reference materials or seek help from a reference librarian.

Adults aged 18-24 are major users of in-library workstations compared with older age groups (71% versus 25%-45%); adults of Hispanic or Latino origin, tend to use in-library workstations more than other racial/ethnic groups (53% versus 29-37%).

In-library workstation visits are used much more for formal education and work-related purposes than other in-library visits (40%versus 26% for education and 22% versus 6% for work-related.)

Impediments to in-library online access include low ratings for workstation attributes and access, especially amount of time allowed in a single session (average 29 minutes compared with 63 minutes for remote online access).

Attributes of workstations and access to them are rated low. In particular, amount of time allowed in a single session is rated lowest. Average time in these sessions is 29 minutes compared with 63 minutes for remote online access.

Attributes of Workstations Used In ***Public Libraries***	Average Rating (1-worst; 5-best)
Hours or days of week made available	4.14
Software applications available	3.92
Hardware available	3.89
Number of workstation in library and ability to get access to them	3.87
Amount of time allowed in a single session	3.67

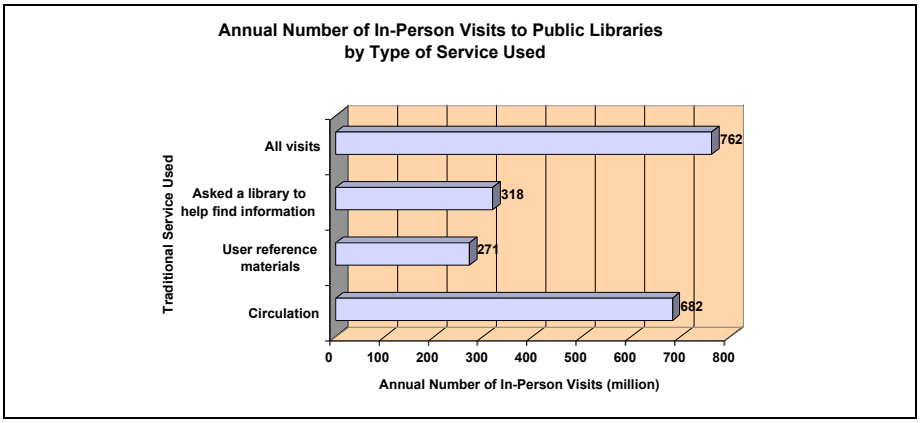
Evidence shows that use of library workstations for online access has not affected traditional library services.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2006) report that uses of traditional public library services (circulation and reference transactions) have increased 17% in items/capita circulated and 7% in reference transactions per capita over the past 13 years.

	Circulation	Reference Transactions
1992	6.4 items/capita	0.99 trans/capita
2005	7.5 items/capita	1.06 trans/capita

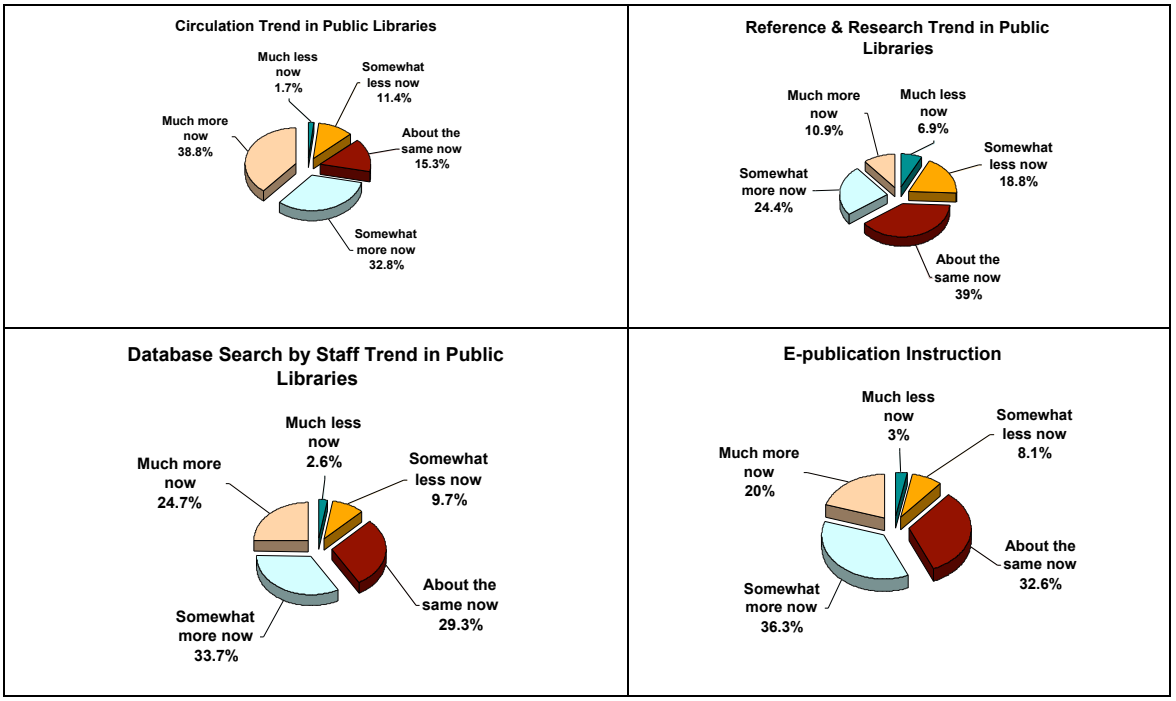
NCES data.

The study survey shows that number of in-person visits by adults that involved traditional services was high in 2006.



A 2007/2008 IMLS survey (The Future of Librarians in the Workforce) with 528 public libraries responding thus far shows a positive trend in traditional public library services. Circulation is increasing and traditional reference and research services are being replaced by database searching by staff and instruction in the use of electronic publications.

Question: "What is the trend in level of service used compared to 5 years ago?"

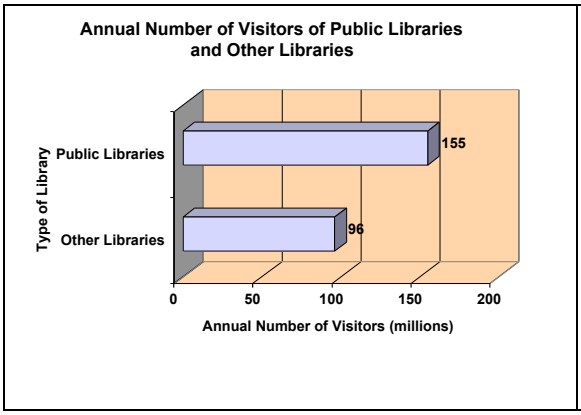


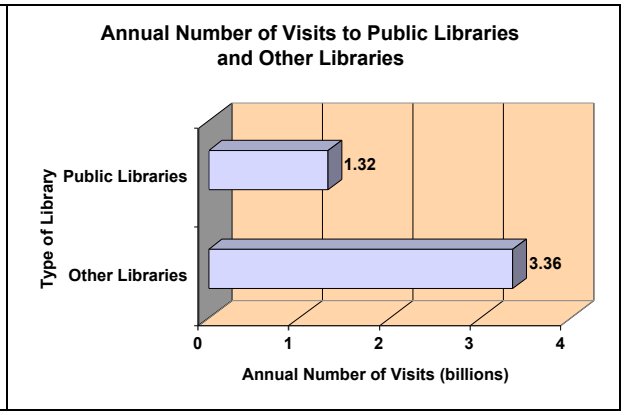
The Internet has also affected other types of libraries in a positive manner.

Other types of libraries include college and university libraries; elementary, middle and high school libraries; special in-house workplace libraries; and other libraries open to interested communities such as libraries associated with museums, churches, military bases, retirement homes, and so on. Together these libraries serve a wide range of adults and others and they have also become reliant on the Internet as a mode of access and as a source of information for their users.

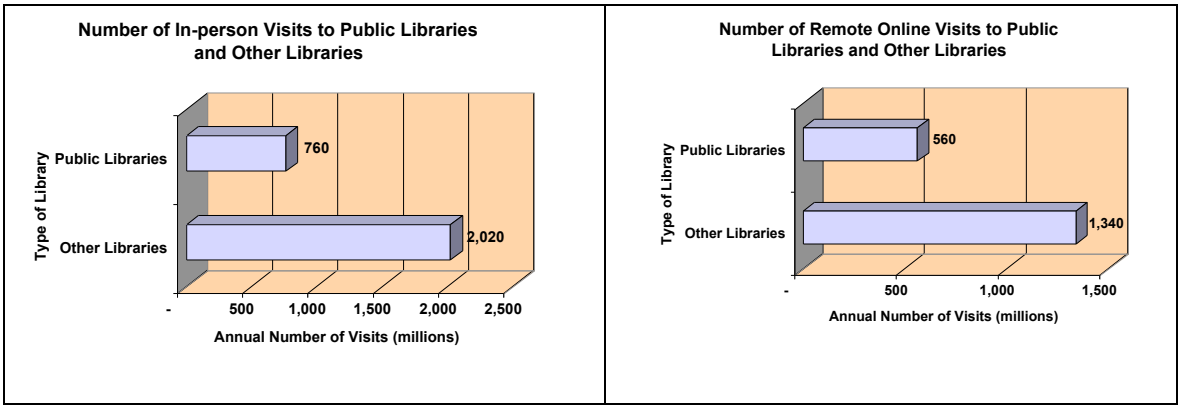
The Internet has become a key mode of access to and resource accessed from other types of libraries. Visitors to other types of libraries follow access patterns similar to visitors to public libraries.

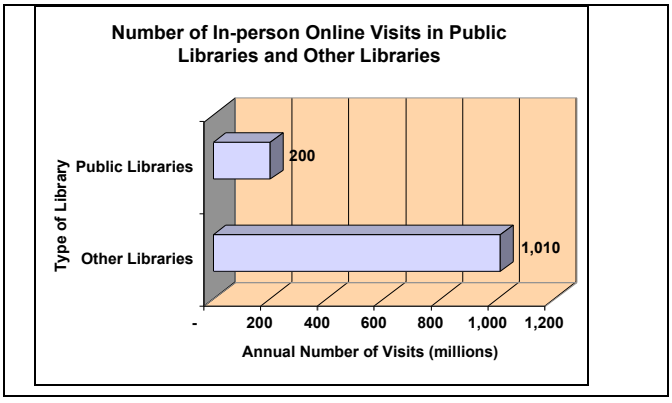
Question: "Have you visited any of the following types of libraries in-person or logged onto library resources via the Internet from some other place in the past 12 months?"





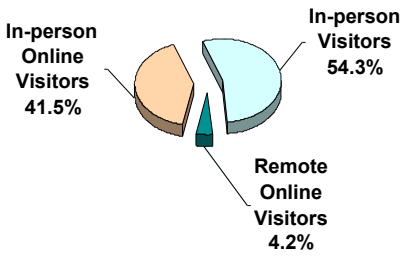
Question: "How many visits did you make to the library in the past 12 month? How many times did you use the Internet in the library? How many times did you log onto the library from some place other than the library?"



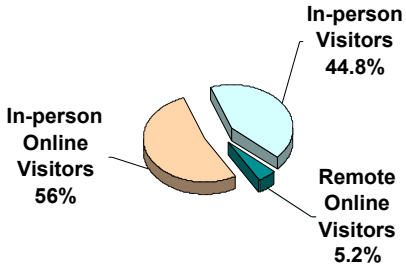


90.5% of other libraries' remote online visitors also visit these libraries in-person, thus suggesting that remote access does not affect in-person visits, just as with public libraries where 90.8% of remote visitors also visit in-person.

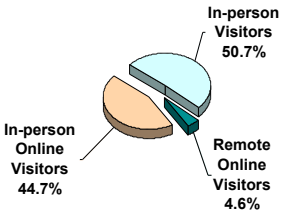
Proportion of Public Library In-Person, Remote and In-Person Online Visitors



Proportion of Other Library In-Person, Remote and In-Person Online Visitors

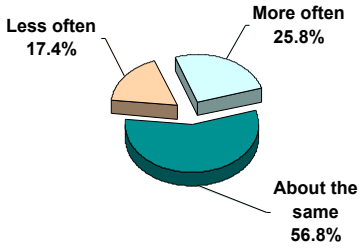


Proportion of All Library In-Person, Remote and In-Person Online Visitors

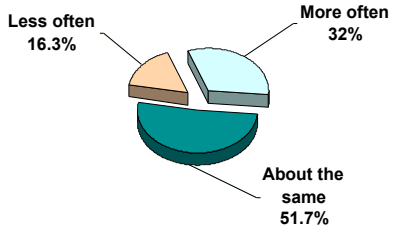


The trend in number of visits to other types of libraries (in-person or remote) is somewhat more positive than for public libraries.

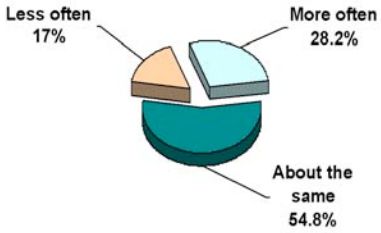
Trend in Number of In-Person or Remote Visits to Public Libraries



Trend in Number of In-Person or Remote Visits to Other Libraries



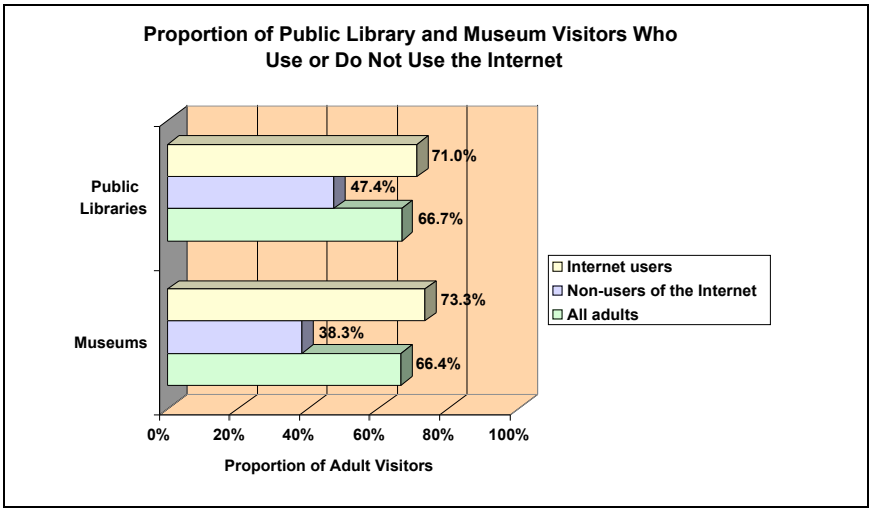
Trend in Number of In-Person or Remote Visits to All Libraries



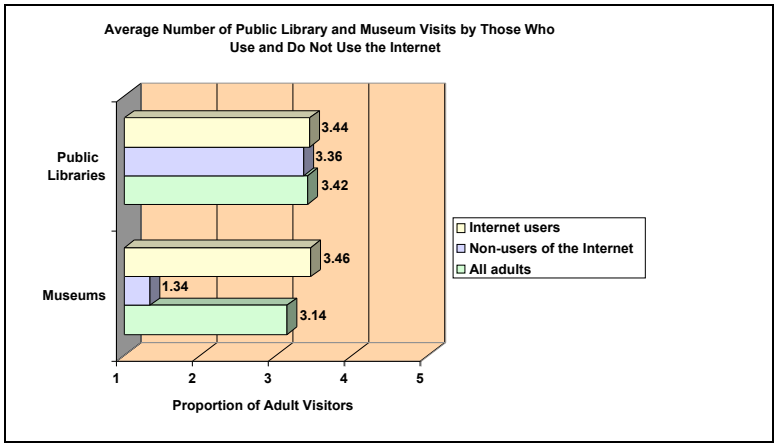
CONCLUSION 4. Internet use is positively related to in-person visits to museums and libraries.

There has been a perception by many that the vast amount of Information provided by the Internet will replace the need for museums and public libraries. Substantial evidence refutes this notion. Internet users are more likely than non-users to visit museums and public libraries and to visit them more frequently, particularly in the case of museums.

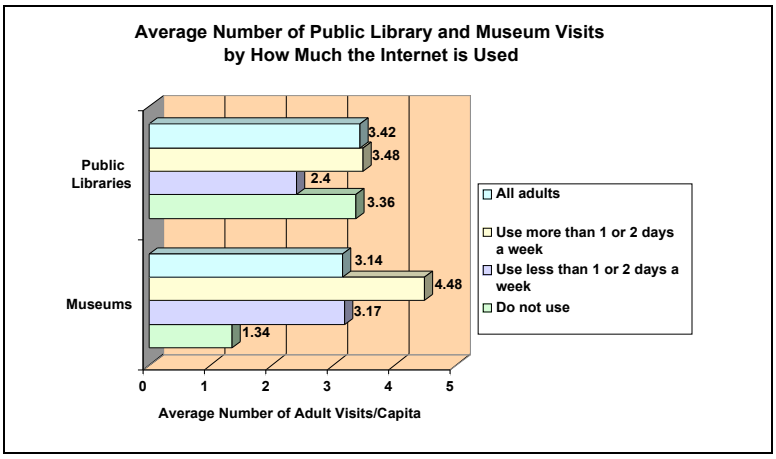
Internet users are about 91% more likely to visit museums and 50% more likely to visit public libraries than non-Internet users.



Internet users visit museums in-person 2.6 times more often and visit public libraries slightly more often than non-Internet users.

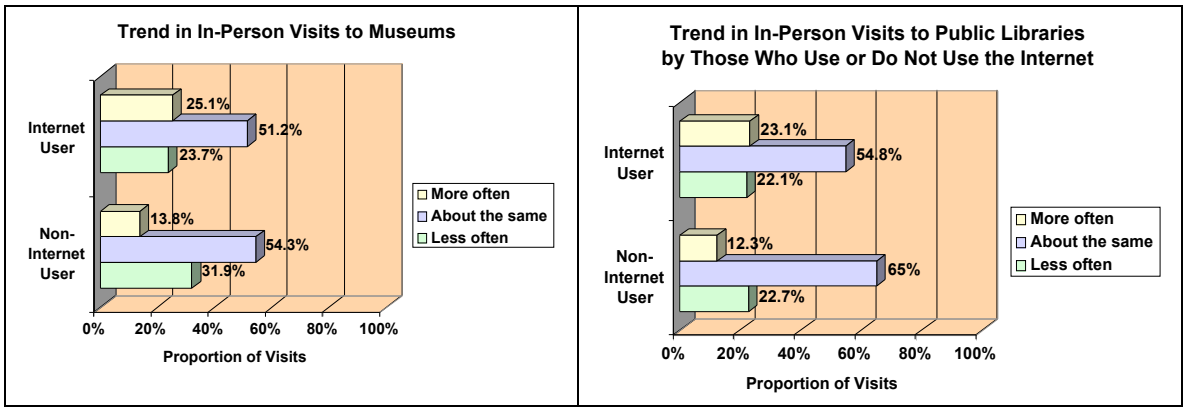


Amount of use of the Internet is positively correlated with the number of in-person visits to museums and has a positive effect on in-person visits to public libraries



Trends in increased in-person visits to museums and public libraries are much more positive with adults who use the Internet than with those who do not.

Question: "In the past 12 months, have you visited museums/public libraries in-person more often, less often or about the same as previously?



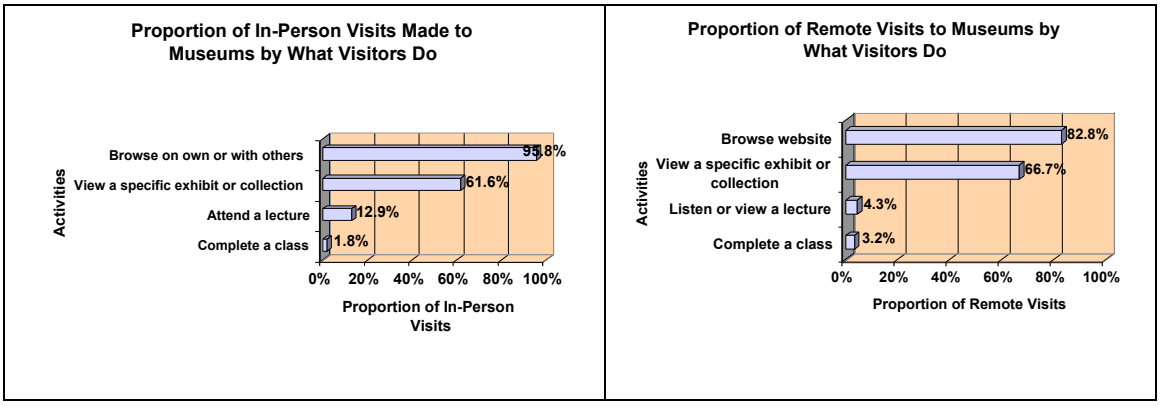
CONCLUSION 5. Museums and public libraries serve important and complementary roles in supporting a wide variety of information needs.

Both museums and public libraries serve informal learning and formal education needs well, in a complementary way. However, public libraries are used increasingly by adults who seek information to satisfy personal or family needs (e.g., health, finance, etc.). They are also used for work-related needs (e.g., research, management, etc.). Users value highly both museums and public libraries for meeting their information needs; otherwise they would not be willing to spend valuable time and money to use them.

Museums visitors average spending nearly 5 hours of their time travelling to and visiting inside museums in addition to $41 in travel costs and fees. This contrasts with an average of 46 minutes for remote visits. Users' willingness to pay for both kinds of visits is testimony to the value they place on museums.

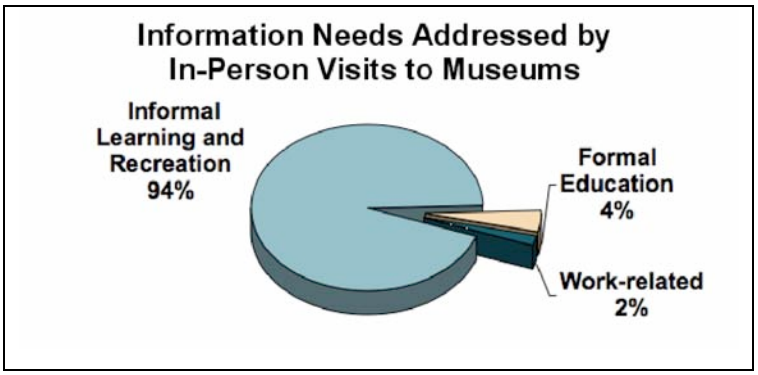
Public library visitors spend an average of 73 minutes travelling to and using public libraries and about $2.50 per visit, indicating the high value of public libraries to them.

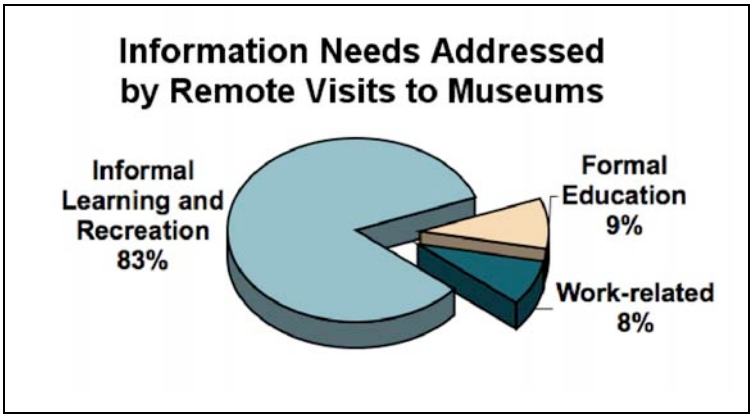
Most museum in-person and remote online visitors browse, view specific exhibits or collections, attend or view a lecture or class, complete a class assignment, among other activities.



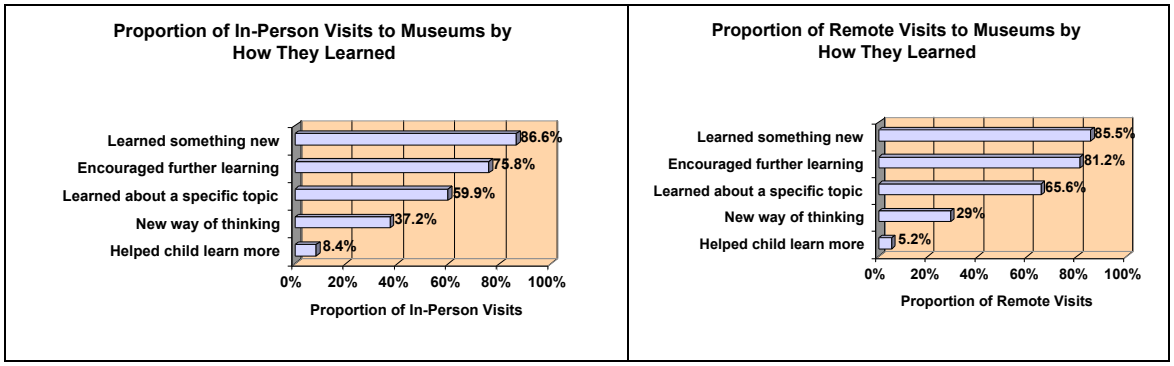
Museum visits are shared experiences occurring in social groups: 61% of in-person visits to museums are with family and/or others (28% of visits).

Museums are overwhelmingly used to address informal learning and recreational needs (89% of needs). Remote visits to museums are used more than in-person visits to support or extend formal education (9% versus 4%) and for work-related needs (8% versus 2%).

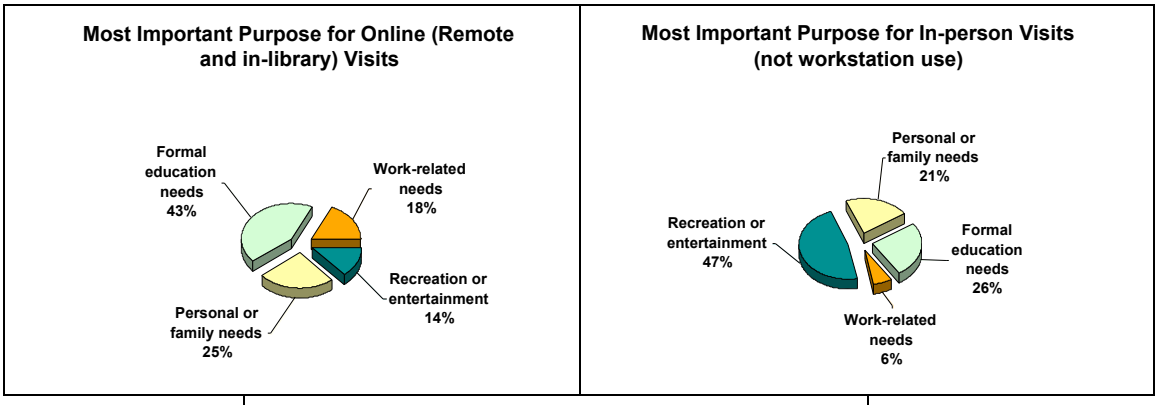


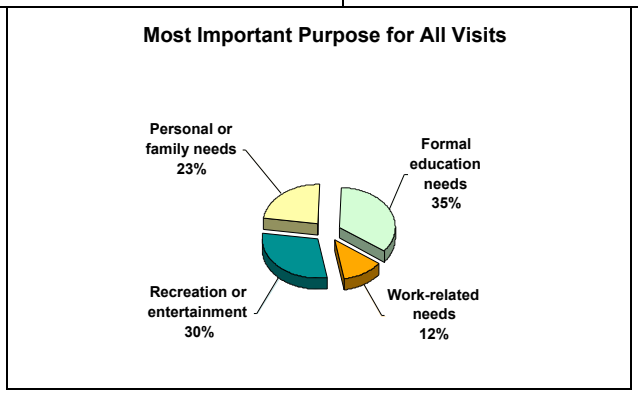


Both in-person and remote visits to museums are learning experiences with adults indicating they learned something new in 87% of in-person visits and 86% of remote visits. Children were helped with learning more in 8% of in-person visits and 5% of remote visits.



The different modes of access to public libraries tend to address very different distributions of information needs. Online visits (both remote and in-library) are used much more for formal education and work-related needs than other in-person visits which are used much more for recreation or entertainment purposes.





Adults report 65 billion situations in which information is needed to make decisions or solve problems in the past 12 months. Libraries are frequently the most helpful source in addressing these situations.

- Health and wellness situations are reported 11.6 billion times most of which involve illness treatment, diagnosis, seeking help, etc., for oneself or others. Public libraries are the most helpful source of information on nearly one-half billion occasions.
- Formal education needs of adult students and teachers occurred 10.5 billion times. Libraries are the most helpful source in over a billion occasions.
- Medical, science and other research information needs in the workplace occur about 5 billion times and libraries are often the most helpful source of information.
- Adult lifelong learning of students, researchers, research and training in the workplace, and adults learning more about history, science, religion, etc., occurs about 13 billion times.