

Minnesota Public Library Annual Report, Counting Methods

Data Elements Suitable for Sampling

Amounts for several data elements can be collected by an actual count or estimated through sampling. These include:

- Library Visits
- Reference Transactions
- Public Internet Sessions
- Wireless Sessions
- Volunteer Hours

You may want to annotate your counting methods on the survey with local notes for each data element to track which method your library uses.

Sampling Methods

If you sample, please consider using one of these sampling methods. Statistical integrity improves when libraries use similar methods and time periods.

- Estimate by counting public service activity during a typical week in April or October and multiplying the count by 52.
- Estimate by counting public service activity during one typical week in April and another in October; add these numbers and multiply by 26.
- Estimate by counting public service activity quarterly during one typical week in February, May, July and November; add these numbers and multiply by 13.

A **typical week** is a time that is neither unusually busy nor unusually slow. Avoid holiday weeks, vacation periods for key staff, or days when extraordinary events are taking place in the community or the library. Choose a week in which the library is open its regular hours. Include seven consecutive calendar days, from Sunday through Saturday (or whenever the library is usually open).

Internet Speed at Public Computers

Please provide your library Internet computers' typical download and upload speeds using [Ookla's Speedtest \(www.speedtest.net\)](http://www.speedtest.net). Test typical speeds on a day and time when the library has an average amount of use. Public library Internet speeds are used by the Governor's Broadband Task Force to measure Internet connection quality across the state.

“Not counted” vs. Zero

Your library may not count some of the data that's requested in the annual report. If you do not sample or count units or activity for a performance indicator, enter “-1” (not counted). Check the “n.c.” (not counted) or “unavailable” box when given the choice. “-1,” “n.c.” and “unavailable” mean there are units or activity in the data element category, but the library has not kept any records or counts. For example, you offer public computer access, but did not count the number of sessions.

“0” (zero) means there are no units or activity for the performance indicator. For example, you would only put 0 for wireless sessions, if your library did not offer WiFi. For financial data, always enter “\$0” (zero dollars) if there is no amount for that data element. Do not leave financial fields blank.

It's important to make the distinction between not counted and zero. “Not counted” allows us to impute the data rather than exclude it. This allows a more accurate measurement of state-wide activity.



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