DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Minnesota Public Library Report, FY20 Provisional Data Elements

Updated August 4 2020

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Overview

The 2020 annual report on Minnesota's public libraries will be unlike any we have had before. The reality is that many of the traditional measures of public library usage will be down in 2020. To maintain the integrity of the report, we will need to stay consistent with the way we have measured our activities in the past.

However, we can also add new measures to acknowledge the way that libraries adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue serving our communities. We can decide in the future whether to keep these new measures, but for now, these are "provisional" additions to the annual report.

These provisional elements come in two batches: a set of **federal-level questions** designed by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS); and a set of **state-level questions**. The federal-level questions will be answered by all public libraries in the U.S in the 2020 report. They are Yes/No questions, which makes them very easier to answer but shallow in terms of the insight they yield.

At the state-level, we can add measures that go beyond Yes/No in order to show the scale of libraries' efforts during the pandemic. In April 2020, State Library Services released guidance on tracking virtual programming and curbside pickup; this document expands on that guidance to help libraries with tracking additional elements.

In this document, you will find clarifications for counting standard data elements in the 2020 annual report. Provisional data elements are highlighted in blue, like this:

[provisional data element]	[working definition of provisional data element]	[number]

We realize that, by the time you receive and work through this guidance, it may be too late for you to count activities or usage that occurred during the spring and summer of 2020. For that reason, or if for any other reason your 2020 data collection was disrupted to the point that you are not able to provide a reasonable estimate, you will have the option to mark data elements "not counted" or "unavailable" on the 2020 annual report. But please plan to report as much as possible, because demonstrating what public libraries do and how they are used is more important now than ever.

Registered Users

Include registrations for temporary or electronic-only cards (for example, Overdrive Instant Digital cards).

Reference

We define reference transactions as a *patron contact with library staff that involves the knowledge, use, recommendation, interpretation and/or instruction in the use of one or more information sources*.

The definition of reference excludes directional questions or questions about library rules or policies. Therefore, we should not count patron interactions to set up or explain curbside service as reference.

If your library uses sample weeks to estimate the number of reference transactions, and your library was closed during a sample week, please use any reference conducted via email, phone, or chat in your count for that week.

Visits

We define visits as *the number of people who entered the library or bookmobile during the year*. With that definition, we can't include curbside pickup as visits; we are adding a provisional element to count that activity. Do count any appointments to enter the library, whether to use computers or browse, as visits under the standard data element.

If your library uses sample weeks to estimate visitor count, it will be difficult to achieve a reasonable estimate for 2020. We recommend counting in-person visits during one week in October, and multiplying that number by the number of weeks your library *building* was fully or partially open to the public in 2020. Alternatively, you will have the option to mark this data element "not counted."

Contactless Visits

Many libraries provide access to collections through curbside pickup, drive-through windows, or other options. This "outside" service is a significant part of how libraries responded to closures and restrictions during the pandemic.

Provisional Data Element for Contactless Visits

For FY20, we will add a new data element to keep track of the number of contactless visits.

Contactless Visits	Number of patron visits to access the collection or printed items. Includes contactless or minimal contact provision of circulation items. Similar terms could include curbside, vestibule, or porch pickups, delivery (mail or drop-off), drive-thru, etc.	COV15/COV15m

Tips for Counting Contactless Visits

- If patrons came the library to access external Wi-Fi, that activity will be counted in wireless sessions, and therefore shouldn't be counted here. Similarly, interactions via phone or chat reference will be counted under reference, and so should not be counted here.

- Pickups or in-person requests at the bookmobile can be counted as contactless visits, if patrons are restricted from entering the bookmobile.

- If your library has multiple locations, please track contactless visits at the outlet level (e.g., branches or bookmobile).

Public Internet Computer Sessions

Many libraries have reopened with access to computer by appointment-only. These sessions count under the standard definition, and there is no need to track sessions-by-appointment separately.

If your library uses sample weeks to estimate use of public computers, it will be difficult to achieve a reasonable estimate for 2020. We recommend counting computer sessions during one week in October, and multiplying that number by the number of weeks your library *building* was fully or partially open to the public in 2020. Alternatively, you will have the option to mark this data element "not counted."

Wireless Sessions

If your library is providing wireless access to the Internet in temporary or alternate locations, such as a bookmobile or mobile hotspots in a parking lot (not circulated), include the number of sessions initiated from those locations, if available.

If your library uses sample weeks to estimate the number of wireless sessions, it will be difficult to achieve a reasonable estimate for 2020. We recommend counting wireless sessions during one week in October, and multiplying that number by the number of weeks your library *building* was fully or partially open to the public in 2020. Alternatively, you will have the option to mark this data element "not counted."

Programs and Attendance

We define programs on the annual report as *any planned event, sponsored by the library, which introduces a group of attendees to library services or provides them with cultural, recreational, or educational information.*

We classify programs by the age of the intended audience: children, young adult, or adult. Attendance at each event is tracked only by number of attendees, regardless of age.

Virtual Programming

The point of this data element is to track the library's potential to *gather people*. So to keep the count of virtual programming consistent with the annual report's definition of a program, think about whether the virtual program *gathers* people to *experience* something *at the same time*.

One great advantage about online events is that they can reach a much wider group than in-person physical programs can. For example, you might gather 15 people to watch an online storytime live, but the storytime might get 600 additional views over the next week. However, if we count on-demand views of programs as attendance, those numbers will dwarf the numbers for physical attendance. We also need to keep in mind that the tool for measuring online viewers (i.e., counting by device or IP address) is different than the tool for measuring in-person attendance (i.e., our eyes). So we need to track both separately.

Provisional Data Elements for Virtual Programming

For FY20, we will add new data elements to keep track of live virtual programs, live virtual attendance, and number and views of recordings of program content.

		Children (<=11yrs)	Young Adult (12-18 yrs)	Adult (>18yrs)	Total
Live Virtual Programs	Number of live, virtual programs during which a library staff member (or other party sponsored by the library) is presenting to or interacting with an audience in real-time. Count each instance of a virtual program as one program.	**P33**	**P34**	**P35**	**P36**
Live Virtual Attendance*	Number of unique views, or peak live views, during a live virtual program.	**P37**	**P38**	**P39**	**P40**
Recordings of Program Content	Number of video or audio recordings created by a library staff person (or other party sponsored by the library) and posted to a video or audio hosting platform for the audience to view or listen to on-demand. Do not include promotional or marketing content.	**COV1**	**COV2**	**COV3**	**COV4**
Views of Recordings of Program Content*	Number of views of a recording until it is taken offline, or until the end of the year, whichever comes first.	**COV5**	**COV6**	**COV7**	**COV8**

*All attendees at each event are counted, regardless of the attendee's own age.

Tips for Counting Virtual Programming

- If a virtual program is delivered live, or is scheduled to be broadcast at a certain time, count it as a virtual program. Count each instance of a virtual program as one program. If there is a way to capture attendance of the *live event*, count that as attendance.
    - Count live virtual programs at the administrative entity level, not the outlet level.
    - Use the number of unique views, or peak live views.
        1) If your library creates a virtual program that is recorded (not live) and can be viewed at any time, do not count it as a virtual program. Instead, keep track of the number of recordings your library creates or sponsors, and the number of views of those recordings.
    - Count recordings at the administrative entity level, not the outlet level.
    - Count the number of views of a recording until it is taken offline, or until the end of the year, whichever comes first.
    - For Facebook videos, use the 1-minute metric. For others, use the best metric you can find to capture what you think should count as a view.
- For live events that are recorded and available for viewing later (e.g., Facebook Live storytime), keep count of later views of the recording *separately* from the live attendee count, if possible.

Self-Directed Activities

One common service that libraries provide, but that we haven't previously tracked on the annual report in a specific way, is the opportunity for visitors to the library to participate independently in an activity or interact with a specially designed space. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these types of activities have become a large part of how libraries engage with their patrons.

Self-directed activities, like programs, may require staff resources to plan and prepare, design or distribute, and they make take place on or off-site. They differ from programs in that activities are unstructured and depend on the participation of the attendee to create the experience, rather than a structured presentation offered to a group at a set time. Examples of self-directed activities include story walks, take-and-make activity kits, and online reading challenges.

This does not include informal services such as homework help.

Provisional Data Elements for Self-Directed Activities

For FY20, we will add new data elements to keep track of the number of self-directed activities the library provided, and the number of participants in these activities.

Self-Directed Activities	Number of planned, independent activities available for a definite time period	COV13/COV13m
Participation in Self-Directed Activities	Number of participants	COV14/COV14m

Tips for Counting Self-Directed Activities

- If your library has multiple locations, please track self-directed activities at the outlet level (e.g., branches or bookmobile).

- Counting the number of participants for these activities can be a challenge, especially if staff are not present at all times. Depending on the activity, you may need to accept estimates of participation, or use creative methods, e.g., asking story walk participants to put a pebble in a bucket when they finish the walk, or checking security camera footage.
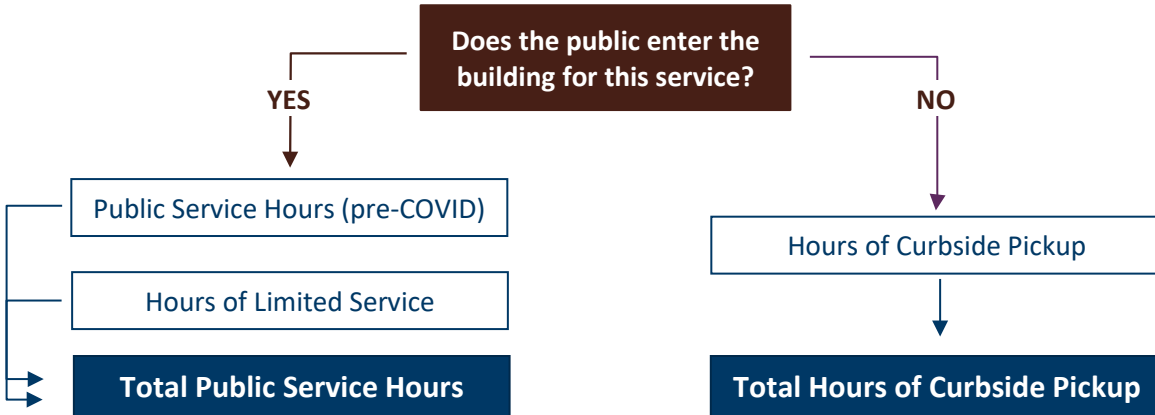
Public Service Hours

The current definition of public service hours includes hours the building is open for public service, minus "hours closed to the public due to emergencies, natural disasters, renovations, budget shortfalls, or other events *even if the staff is scheduled to work*."

For the FY2020 annual report, Public Service Hours should include only the hours the library building was open to the public. Any days the library building was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic should be excluded from this count, even if staff is working in the building.

As the stay-at-home order lifted, many Minnesota public libraries began to offer curbside service, in which patrons visited the library *premises* to access the collection or printed items. While we can't include these hours of service in the standard Public Service Hours data element, we will separately track hours of curbside service.

For the federal-level elements, you will be asked to report the number of weeks the library was open with "limited occupancy," which "can include reduced hours open, limits on the number of public members inside the physical building, appointment only on-site library use, visitor time limits, closed stacks or meeting rooms, etc."

When deciding which hours to count where, think about whether the public enters the building. If yes, those hours will go into the total of Public Service Hours for the year. If no, the hours should be tracked separately as hours of curbside pickup.

Hours of Limited Service

Provisional Data Elements for Limited Service Hours

For FY20, we will add new data elements to keep track of public service hours during limited service.

Weekly Hours of Limited Service	Number of hours per week that the library is open with limited services such as reduced hours open, limits on the number of visitors inside the physical building, appointment-only on-site library use, visitor time limits, closed stacks or meeting rooms, etc.. If number of hours varied, enter the number of hours most commonly offered at the library or outlet.	**COV12/COV12m**
Number of Weeks of Limited Service	Number of weeks in 2020 that the library is open with limited services.	**COV11/COV11m**

Tips for Counting Hours of Limited Service

- This is very broadly defined; **most libraries' service hours will be in this category for the remainder of 2020**.

- If your library has multiple locations, please track hours of limited service at the outlet level (e.g., branches or bookmobile).

Hours of Curbside Pickup

Provisional Data Elements for Curbside Pickup Hours

For FY20, we will add new data elements to keep track of hours of curbside pickup.

Weekly Hours of Curbside Pickup	Number of hours per week of curbside pickup service. If number of hours varied, enter the number of hours most commonly offered at the library or outlet.	**COV10/COV10m**
Number of Weeks of Curbside Pickup	Number of weeks in 2020 that the library offered curbside pickup.	**COV9/COV9m**

Tips for Counting Hours of Curbside Pickup

- If your library continues to offer curbside pickup after the library building has fully or partially reopened to the public, **please continue to keep track** of the number of weeks you are providing this service.

- If your library has multiple locations, please track curbside pickup weeks at the outlet level (e.g., branches or bookmobiles).

Computers

Many libraries have had to reduce the number of computers available to the public to make their spaces conducive to physical distancing. To report the number of computers on the annual report, please use the count of computers available at the end of the year.

Library-Specific Data

If your library devised new services or ideas in 2020 that aren't covered elsewhere in the annual report, like sending postcards or calling patrons as a wellness check, we encourage you to track that activity!

Even if we don't track these services on a state-level, they are still an important part of how your library responded to the pandemic.