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Californians Use Public Libraries in Record Numbers

Sacramento - Confirming what local public library directors have reported over the past three years, a new study by the California State Library documents a significant uptick in the use of public libraries statewide.

California Library Statistics 2010 summarizes data submitted by 181 public libraries representing 1,860 public service points across the state. Comparing fiscal years 2008-2009 to 2007-2008, California public libraries reported that on a per capita basis, visits to public libraries increased 6%, circulation increased 7%, reference questions increased 11%, and the availability of public access computers per 1000 population increased by 4%. Over the past five years, public access computers per 1000 population have increased a dramatic 26% in California public libraries due to heavy demand.

These California figures reflect national trends reported this week by the American Librarian Association (ALA). Survey results indicate that more than two-thirds of American adults have a public library card, the greatest number since ALA started measuring library card usage in 1990. Americans in record numbers are using public library computers to look for jobs, seek higher education, grow small businesses, find health information, and connect with service organizations. More than 71% of public libraries nationwide provide their community's only free public access to computers and the Internet. Public libraries also serve as community hubs for literacy tutoring, technology and employment workshops, and volunteerism.

Both *California Library Statistics 2010* and ALA's *2010 State of America's Libraries* were released to coincide with National Library Week, April 11 to 17, which honors public, academic, and special libraries nationwide as places for opportunity, education, self-help, and lifelong learning.

About the California State Library: Now celebrating its 160th anniversary, the California State Library is the main reference and research library for the Governor's office, legislature, state employees, and the general public. It supports California's public libraries by administering grants for programs in historical preservation, library construction, broadband connectivity, civil liberties education, literacy and volunteering. For more information about the State Library, please visit www.library.ca.gov.

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