

Facts, Figures and How Libraries are Changing

How many libraries are there?

- The UK has 4,204 permanent public library sites and 585 mobile libraries.
 - England has 3,137 permanent sites and 433 mobiles.
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How many people visit libraries?

- UK residents made 340 million visits to public libraries in 2004-5 – that's 5.7 visits per person. In England there were 288 million visits.
 - That's more people than go to football matches each year, or than visit the UK's top 20 tourist attractions put together.
 - Around 47% of the UK adult population are registered with their library.
 - After a period of decline, visits to libraries are on the up. They hosted 22 million more visits in 2004-5 than they did in 2001-2, an increase of 7%.
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Who are these people?

- Libraries are free and open to absolutely everyone in the community.
 - 46% of males and 52% of females visited a library at least once in the last 12 months
 - 49% of parents with children visit libraries at least once a month.
 - Ethnic minority groups use public libraries as much as 10% more often than the national average.
 - Around 31% of library visitors come from the DE socio-economic profile, with a further 25% from C2, 30% from C1 and 14% from AB.
 - Adults living in rural areas use the library more than those living in urban areas.
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Why do people visit libraries?

- 73% of visitors say they use libraries to borrow or return books. 21% seek information, 13% use the internet, 12% read a newspaper and 10% study or work.
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How is libraries' work with readers changing?

- Libraries are transforming their work with readers, developing a role that embraces, but goes far beyond, book lending.
- They support 4,500 reading groups for all ages. Six years ago Essex Libraries had no reading groups; now they have 332.

- See www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk for a new national online readers group and a database of local groups that people can join.
- Most libraries now have their catalogues online, and offer 24/7 online and telephone reservations and renewals.
- Many offer self service facilities for readers to borrow and return books. Some have out of hours drop off boxes.
- National library partnerships created by The Reading Agency animate work with readers. BBC RaW supports work with adults trying to improve literacy skills. Orange sponsors a national Chatterbooks network of children's reading groups. Nine British adult publishers are piloting new ways of working with libraries, and now send top authors to libraries right across the UK.
- Libraries are working together as a national force through new co-ordinated programmes. 600,000 children took part in 2005's 'Summer Reading Challenge'. Libraries taking part loaned 16 million items to children over the summer.
- Under the Bookstart scheme, libraries and health professionals team up to provide free packs of books to every new baby in the UK, together with reading tips for parents. The scheme promotes a lifelong love of books from the earliest age.
- Libraries loaned more than a quarter of a million copies of the books featured on Channel 4's 2005 'Richard & Judy Bookclub'.
- Because they lend books free, libraries help people experiment with reading. 39% of book borrowers will try new authors or books in libraries, compared to 20% of buyers.
- Libraries are helping their staff to offer a customer-friendly service to readers. The new online 'Frontline' course trains staff to understand the theory and practice of reader development.

What books do they borrow?

- 330.2 million books were borrowed from UK libraries in 2004-5 – an average of 5.52 books per person per year. Libraries in England loaned 279.9 million books.
- After a period of decline in the last decade, children's book borrowing rose last year: from 86.8 million books in 2003-4 to 88.6 million books in 2004-5.
- But adult borrowing has declined by more than 40% in the last decade: from 422.5 million books in 1994-5 to 241.6 million books in 2004-5.
- Children borrow more books than adults – an average of 8.1 books per child aged 14 or under in 2004-5, compared to 5.0 books per person for adults.
- England's most popular library is the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, which loaned 1,023,881 items in 2004-5.
- Children's author Jacqueline Wilson is the most borrowed author in public libraries, followed by Josephine Cox and Danielle Steel. The most borrowed book in 2004-5 was Patricia Cornwell's Blow Fly.

Book borrowing trends

- The decline in book borrowing is linked to a complex range of factors. Book expenditure is likely to be among them, but so are lifestyle factors, the online availability of reference material and radical changes in the reading market.
- There are now signs of improvement. Children's book issues reversed last year, for example.
- Libraries spent £95.5m on new books in 2004-5 – 15% less than they did ten years ago. There was a low point around the turn of the century but since 2002 expenditure has increased.

- Libraries have 108 million books on their shelves – 22 million less than they did ten years ago. Part of this reduction may be due to the removal of old, rarely used stock and by reference material being increasingly online. In 2004-5 UK libraries were adding new lending stock by half a million more items than in 2001-02 (11.5m over 11.0m).
- Libraries do important, intensive work with people needing special help with reading. This does not necessarily result in high book issues, but does result in more confident readers. Examples include families with a parent in prison, children in foster care and adults trying to improve basic literacy skills.

Libraries offer reading through different media

- Libraries in England provide 68.5 million hours of internet access to the public each year. Branches share more than 37,000 computer terminals with online access.
- Libraries loaned 38 million talking books, language packs, CDs, DVDs, videos and CD-Roms in 2004-5.

Eight examples of how libraries are going places:

- After a major refurbishment three years ago, **Blackburn Library** has reinvented itself as a community resource with a retail feel – bright, spacious and funkily lit. It offers PDAs loaded with ebooks to take on holiday, comfy chairs, self service borrowing and a range of clubs including reading groups linked to others around the world, reflecting Blackburn's diverse population.
 - **Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library** has answered visitors' needs with longer opening hours and a popular retail-style 'Express' format. Late night and Sunday opening, self-service and a quick and easy choice of books has pulled in plenty of new users, and the library now loans more than one million books a year.
 - **Essex Libraries** find dozens of ways to inspire people to read. The county's 73 branches boast 332 reading groups, a 'Library Direct' mobile service and downloadable e-books take books into people's own homes. A library-organised Essex Book Festival brings readers and authors together every year.
 - **Widnes Library** in Halton provides a 21st century reading service in a stylish 19th century building. No ID is needed to join, and books are presented front facing, in colour coded subject categories. There are quick choice areas, five adult and one teen reading groups and an annual Orange Prize event. Visits are rising by 20% a year.
 - **Ashford Library** in Surrey re-opened as a reader-centred facility after a refurbishment in early 2006. Old-fashioned counters have given way to modern self-service units and more space for books, and stock has been overhauled to offer more new and popular titles.
 - Readers have been at the heart of **Allerton Library** in Liverpool since a full refurbishment in 2005. Book clubs and reading promotions are popular, while hi-tech self-service, 24/7 library access via a website and relaxed membership rules have updated people's perceptions of libraries and attracted new users.
 - A £20m overhaul of the **Wythenshawe Forum in Manchester** has turned a drab civic complex into a bright modern hub of the community. The library shares space with a leisure centre, education services, nursery and health centre, and works hard to nurture emergent readers through literacy schemes and book stock bought especially for them.
 - **Sutton Library** has overhauled its layout to give customers quicker and easier access to books and staff. Displays and furniture mimic smart high street shops, a busy programme of events gets people talking about books, and staff take pride in customer service and reader development.
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