

# PENNSYLVANIA'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES:

Filling Real Needs,  
Returning Real Value

TAXPAYER-RETURN-ON-INVESTMENT (ROI) IN PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES STUDY

## Talking Points

- Most of us have always believed that public libraries are valuable community resources. The study done by the University of North Carolina's School of Information and Library Science not only proves this but also shows the significant extent to which nearly all of us rely on public libraries.
- The study concludes that Pennsylvania's 474 public libraries, (630 when including satellites such as branches and bookmobiles) which serve nearly 12 million Pennsylvanians, provide a return on investment of \$5.50 in benefits for every \$1 of tax support. That means a return of \$55 for every \$10 of local, state and federal taxes we invest in supporting our public libraries.
- The 5.5 to 1 ratio was calculated in the following manner. Taxpayers dedicate \$249 million in tax dollars annually for public libraries in Pennsylvania. If we didn't have these public libraries, the economic loss would amount to \$1.34 billion, according to the study.
- The bulk of the loss would be due to the higher cost of finding and using alternative sources of information. It also would include lost library jobs, lost library purchases and lost revenue from library-related businesses.
- Of 9.1 million adults in Pennsylvania, 51.6 percent visited a public library in person during a year's time, and an additional 13.2 percent connected with one online.
- In all, public libraries in Pennsylvania totaled 40.8 million in-person visits in the year preceding the study. Nearly half involved adults and nearly 40 percent involved school-age children.
- People visit public libraries in person for many purposes – to check out a book, tape, CD or DVD; to find reference information or do research; or to use a library computer, to name a few.
- The study clearly demonstrates that public libraries are used by adults, school-age and preschool children, teachers, retirees, business people and others for meeting educational, personal, family and work-related needs, in addition to recreation and entertainment.

## ROI Study Talking Points

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- A large number of people who use a remote connection – close to half – are researching family or personal issues.
- At least half of the time, users considered the information they obtained, whether in person or by remote connection, to be “absolutely essential” to them.
- Overall, users of public libraries are pretty evenly spread among age groups and income groups up to \$150,000 per year.
- Users value public libraries because they perceive them to be convenient and easy to use. They believe that the information is trustworthy, that libraries are the best source of information and that using the library helps them save time and money.